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JUNE 14, 2004

The Nation.

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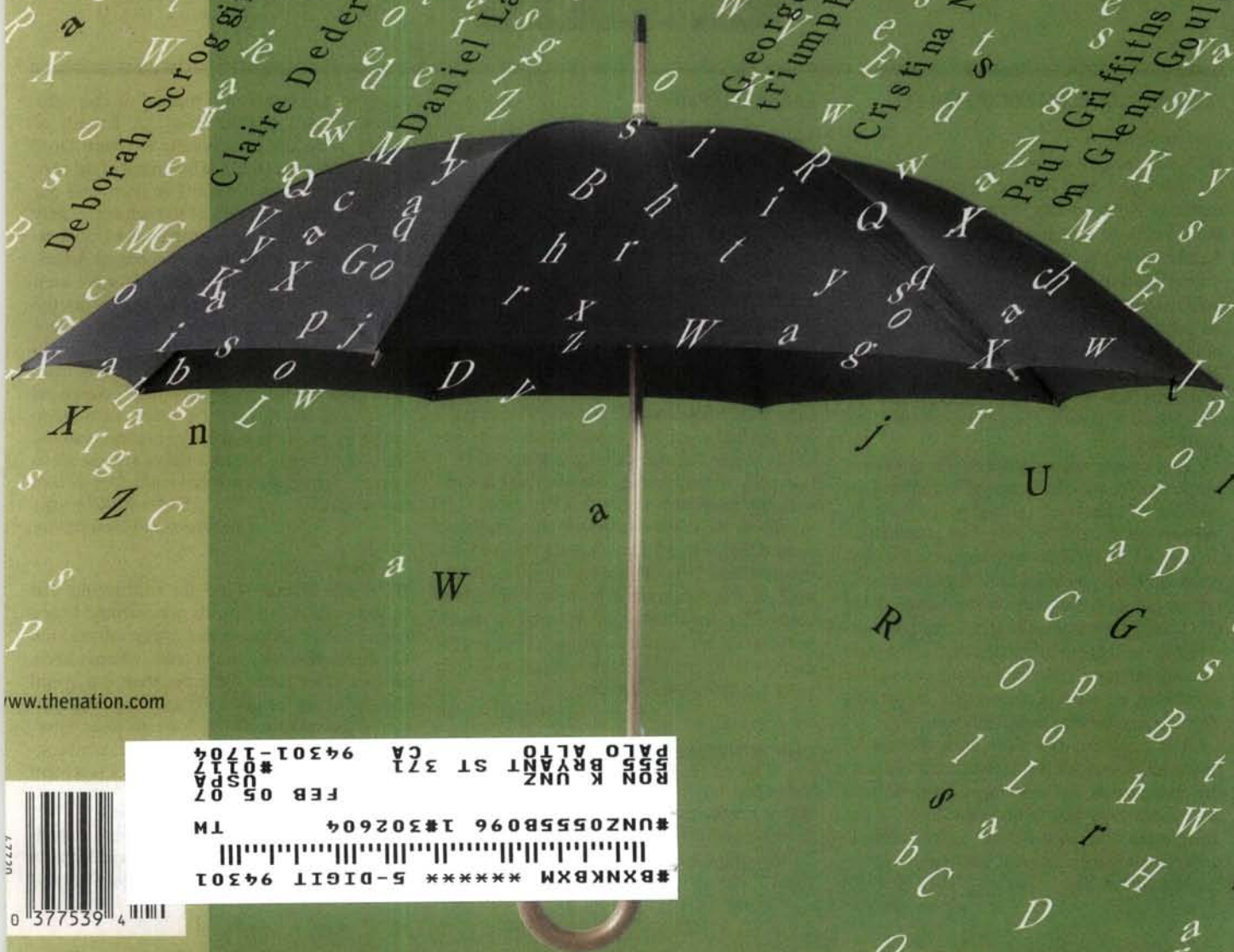
Deborah Scroggins on Africa's impasse
Claire Dederer on SCUM
Daniel Lazare on Samuel Huntington
George Scialabba on the triumph of conservatism
Cristina Nehring on war porn
Paul Griffiths on Glenn Gould



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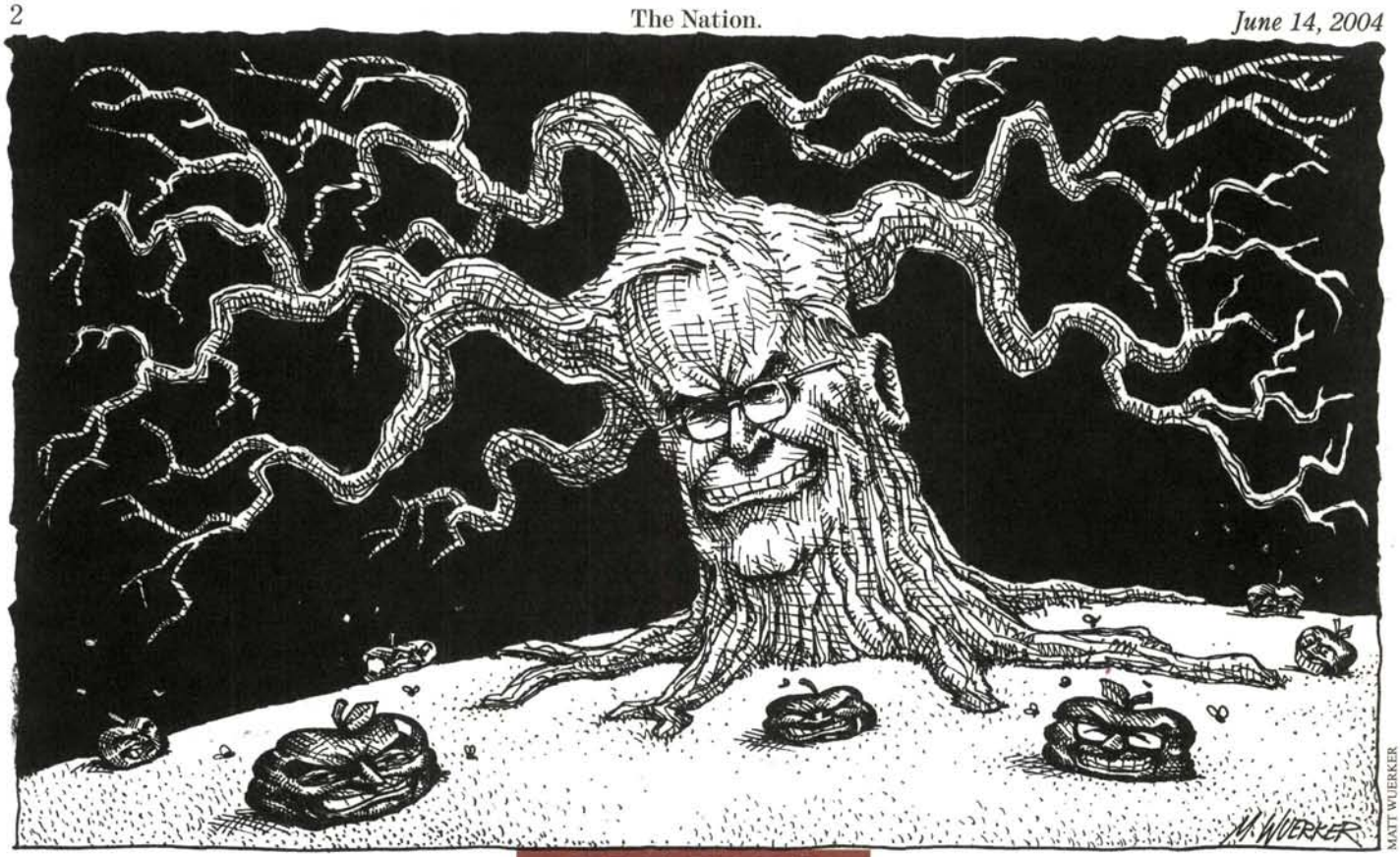

MATT WUERKER

LETTERS

'TENDENTIOUS' ON TOCQUEVILLE

Port Jefferson, NY

■ Daniel Lazare's review/essay on Tocqueville ["*L'Amérique, Mon Amour*," April 26] is tendentious. No doubt any review of an important book has to be selective. But it is curious that Lazare doesn't seem to recognize that Tocqueville is writing neither as a historian nor as a political scientist (and still less as a travel writer, as Lazare at one point suggests in another put-down) but as an engaged political philosopher. It is not "*L'Amérique, Mon Amour*" that concerns Tocqueville but democracy—which for Tocqueville is a *problem rather than a solution*.

That Lazare misunderstands (for polemical purposes) Tocqueville's attempt to confront the *problem of democracy* is clear in his concluding paragraph. After a (distorted) presentation of Tocqueville's politics with regard to the 1848 revolution, he concludes that "there was nothing for him to do but retire to his estate" and to die. Lazare seems unaware that Tocqueville devoted those years to producing one of the most valuable attempts to understand the roots of the distortions of modern democracy by writing *The Old Regime and the Revolution*.

It is staggering that there is no mention of this work. It was not completed, but it is a worthy continuation of *Democracy in America* and an indispensable key to understanding not just Tocqueville's America but, more important, to understanding the dilemmas confronting democratic politics today. DICK HOWARD

LAZARE REPLIES

New York City

■ My essay attacked Tocqueville on a number of grounds—for his equation of local political practice in the United States with democracy in general, for his argument that America was somehow immune to revolution, and for his uncritical espousal of a Jeffersonian concept of state sovereignty that the Civil War would soon discredit. Dick Howard addresses none of those issues and instead accuses me of being "tendentious." He also accuses me of distorting Tocqueville's position on the 1848 revolution so as to suggest that the author of *Democracy in America* had reached a political dead end. Howard evidently thinks this is unfair, but unfortunately it is exactly what happened. Tocqueville opposed both the mass democracy that had erupted in the streets and Louis-Napoleon's antidemocratic coup d'état, a crippling contradiction and one that left him little choice but to retreat to his estate and bury himself in his historical studies. I agree that for Tocqueville democracy was "a problem rather than a solution." That is precisely why he found himself so paralyzed amid growing democratic upheaval.

DANIEL LAZARE

CHICKENHAWKS DOWN

Arlington, Va.

■ Our magazine regularly receives letters of surprise and encouragement that open with a telltale phrase like "as a lifelong progressive…" The surprise is that they would find so much to appreciate in a journal of the right. Michael Lind's brilliant essay "A Tragedy of Errors" [Feb. 23] compels me to return those compliments. It is the best treatment of the neoconservative phenomenon I've seen, and our editors are connoisseurs of the subject. Surely Lind's "Not since Stalin ordered the US Communist Party to go underground has an American political faction pretended to dissolve itself in public like this" deserves a prize as the sharpest polemical sentence of the new millennium (even if it might have given some pause to *Nation* editors of an earlier era). In any case, "as a (almost) lifelong conservative" I commend *The Nation* for this terrific essay, valuable to progressives, but even more so to conservatives, who could dearly use its wisdom if they are to begin restoring prudence and sanity to their own movement. SCOTT MCCONNELL

The American Conservative

Los Altos, Calif.

■ I thank Michael Lind for confirming that neocons are in fact liberals gone wrong. I have come to the conclusion that conservatives look for the ideal society in the past, whereas liberals look to the future. Progress, then, is a liberal idea, whereas the good old days are conservative. Neocons, however, look to their egregiously erroneous view of the future. Lind connects the dots. ALAN RICHARDSON

Lawrence, NY

■ I have seen Richard Perle in interviews blandly call for regime change in Iran and Syria, a

(Continued on Page 60)

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EDITORIALS

The Big Money Election

For anyone who wants to reduce the role of big money in politics, the 2004 election is an object lesson in how *not* to solve the problem. John Kerry's briefly floated proposal to delay his formal presidential nomination, which would have allowed him to keep raising private money for as long as George W. Bush, is the latest sign that the post-Watergate system of partial public financing is simply not up to the task. If we want elections, not auctions, where candidates compete on a level playing field and all voters are equal, we have to overhaul the system.

The first blow to the existing system came in 1999, when then-Governor Bush opted out of the matching-funds program for the primaries, freeing him from any spending limits. This time around, following the same model, Bush has raised more than $200 million, making him the largest fundraiser in US history. Everything that has happened on the Democratic side of the fence—from Kerry and Howard Dean's decision to skip the matching-funds program, to the rise of independent soft-money groups known as 527s, to Kerry's latest gambit—is simply playing catch-up.

Absurdly, Republicans who fought the McCain-Feingold soft-money ban in Congress and the courts now claim to be upset by the soft money flowing to Democratic 527s, like America Coming Together. The best solution, however, is not heavy-handed regulation of political spending but rather full public financing to candidates who refuse to raise private money, including providing additional public funds if they are targeted by such independent expenditures.

That's why those who want to keep comprehensive campaign-finance reform moving forward should pay attention to the fight quietly under way in Arizona, one of a handful of states (including Maine) with some form of Clean Elections systems, which offer candidates full public financing. In Arizona the new system has increased competition and diversity among candidates, reduced the money gap between challengers and incumbents, and freed its participants from the all-consuming money chase.

Precisely because they fear Arizona's good example, a small group of developers, bankers and corporate lobbyists with conservative ties that run all the way up to Bush and Tom DeLay are attacking the state's pioneering system. They've raised hundreds of thousands of dollars to put an amendment to the state constitution on the November ballot to nullify the law. Two of the big-money backers of this special-interest power grab are the Bush Pioneers, who have raised more than $100,000 for his campaigns, and the Illinois-based Golden Rule Insurance company, a longtime GOP ally. Their goal: to keep the same corrupt system that has brought us a prescription-drug bill tailored for HMOs and the pharmaceutical and insurance companies; the weakening of environmental rules to pay back oil and gas interests; and huge tax breaks handed over to corporations and wealthy individuals. Two of Arizona's top elected officials, Democratic Governor Janet Napolitano and Republican Senator John McCain, have endorsed the Keep It Clean campaign, along with nearly sixty groups, including the League of Women Voters, the AARP and the firefighters union. They need our support.

To help keep Clean Elections in Arizona and to further the movement's spread, go to www.pcactionfund.org/five or mail a check to Keep it Clean, 77 E. Columbus Avenue, Suite 209, Phoenix, AZ 85003.

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Sham Plan for Iraq

The "new" Bush plan to "help Iraq achieve democracy and freedom," far from laying out the definite steps needed to resolve the Iraq crisis, instead sets the stage for continuing US occupation and for continuing instability and violence.

Impelled by his falling approval ratings and the images of US torture of Iraqi prisoners, George W. Bush attempted in his May 24 speech to sell the Iraq war using one of the false arguments he has used from the start: that "Iraq is now the central front in the war on terror." (The other argument, the presence of WMD, is no longer available.) After this dishonest linking of Iraq and 9/11, Bush went on to outline how the United States is fighting terrorism while building democracy in Iraq, a plan that includes providing Iraqis with a sham version of sovereignty on June 30.

Iraq will never be sovereign, or stable, as long as it is occupied by 138,000 American troops—troops that it cannot order to withdraw, let alone control. The furthest Washington appears ready to go is to say, as Bush did in his speech, that these troops "will operate under American command as a part of a multinational force authorized by the United Nations." But as envisioned in a draft UN resolution prepared by the United States, neither the "multinational force," nor the protection force for the UN mission that is to be part of it, will report to either the interim Iraqi government or to the UN. Instead, as described by British UN ambassador Sir Emyr Jones Parry, the plan is for the Iraqis to "consent" to the new arrangements, to be worked out in an exchange of letters.

Other aspects of Bush's plan are no less deceitful; for example, Bush said that Washington will "hand over authority" to the Iraqis and "continue rebuilding [Iraq's] infrastructure" but failed to note that Administration officials said earlier that the interim Iraqi government will not have the power to overturn any of the privatization or security laws imposed by US proconsul Paul Bremer or the power to draft or enforce any significant new legislation. Iraq will, however, continue paying reparations to Kuwait from its oil revenues.

Members of the UN Security Council may yet demand significant changes in the resolution, and realities on the ground may very well force the United States to give up more control. But for now, the Bush "plan" appears simply to call for more of the same.

COMMENT

Retire Father Greenspan

Alan Greenspan is well loved among the governing elites and seldom criticized, because he convincingly plays the role of America's Dr. Pangloss. When the occasional upset occurs, the wise Federal Reserve chairman comes forward to reassure the citizenry: Not to worry, we are still living in the best of all possible worlds. Disregard the stock-market meltdown that destroyed trillions in putative savings; market adjustments of value are entirely normal to free-market capitalism and altogether unavoid-

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COMMENT

able. Never mind Bush's budget deficits; these will be corrected through further tax reductions and privatization of federal functions like Social Security. Do not fret over the buildup of household debt, the stagnation of hourly wages, the absence of jobs for many unfortunate citizens; people should instead feel good about the economy. Productivity is improving robustly, so too corporate profits, which insures that everything will work out for the best.

Father Greenspan has been taking a victory lap these past few months, declaiming cheerfully on these and other matters, basking in the glow of his seventeen-year tenure. The President recently nominated Greenspan for another term as Fed chairman—his last, presumably—and the Senate's reconfirmation hearing will likely resemble Queen Victoria's Jubilee. Greenspan made himself the living embodiment of the conservative market orthodoxy that still reigns over conventional opinion, despite its spectacular failures. He preaches it, he governs by it, he explains away the many contradictions. Not surprisingly, the monied interests of Wall Street and corporate America like it like that. So do the major news media who, true believers themselves, see nothing to question in Greenspan's monetary policy. In the face of this establishment unanimity, even once-reliable critics like organized labor have lost their voice.

But all is not quite as Greenspan would have us believe, and someday hence, when a bold young scholar sets out to write a revisionist history of the Greenspan era, she will find an abundance of good material. He triggered two recessions, both by accident if one believes his public testimony. He passively observed the runaway inflation of stock-market prices and refused to do anything to avert the eventual collapse. He engineered legality for the new megabanks like Citigroup and JPMorgan Chase, both of which became festivals of megabanking fraud. The central indictment, however, will involve the many ways Greenspan's hard-money policy unbalanced the economy by favoring financial interests over the real economy of work and wages. For most of his tenure, in pursuit of reducing inflation further, Greenspan held back economic growth in order to maintain an artificial surplus of labor—higher unemployment that guaranteed that wages would stagnate to the benefit of profits and financial returns. It worked, of course, but far too well. Greenspan drove the price indicators down to zero and didn't know when to stop. He pushed the economy into the danger zone of deflation—falling prices, inadequate demand, imperiled debtors—and reversed course much too late to avoid various disasters. The economy is still struggling with the consequences of his monumental error.

These twilight years may give Greenspan an opportunity to make modest amends. During most of his tenure, he responded obediently to the bond-market "vigilantes" who cheered on the Federal Reserve's obsession with fighting the last war—inflation—and scolded him when he seemed too slow to tighten credit. Now these Wall Street wiseguys are back, once again demanding that the Fed raise short-term interest rates promptly and substantially or else face a renewal of runaway price inflation. This same notorious logic was regularly employed by the Fed during the 1980s and most of the 1990s to slow down the economy and suppress wages. After the bubble and boom and breakdown of the nineties, is the Fed ready to resume the same ruinous monetary policy that led to the great imbalances?

Maybe not. This time, Greenspan seems quite reluctant to act on the bond market's supposed wisdom. He talks vigilance and might bump up rates slightly, but so far hasn't yielded to the Wall Street claque's hard-money demands. The chairman knows (though he has never said so plainly) that rising prices are welcome news, backing away from deflationary risks and giving companies more leeway to increase prices *and* to increase wages. In fact, the Federal Reserve has deliberately been trying to stimulate a little price inflation for those very reasons and appears to be succeeding. Reversing monetary policy at this critical point could be disastrous, crumpling the fragile growth before the healing effects have reached ordinary folks and tightening the squeeze on over-indebted families.

Father Greenspan deserves a rest. It would be nice to see the Senate in its wisdom retire him, but that's not going to happen. At the very least, however, Congress has to get real, set aside the Panglossian bromides and begin asking tough questions about what Greenspan's tenure has done to the country and how monetary policy might be remade to serve all Americans—not just the chairman's admirers.

WILLIAM GREIDER

Kerry and Communion

ELECTION MATTERS

Is it a sin for Catholics to vote for former altar boy John Kerry? That's the line Colorado Springs Bishop Michael Sheridan began pushing in early May, when he penned a pastoral letter to his 125,000 parishioners titled, "On the Duties of Catholic Politicians and Voters." "Any Catholic politicians who advocate for abortion, for illicit stem-cell research or for any form of euthanasia ipso facto place themselves outside full communion with the Church and so jeopardize their salvation," Sheridan wrote. "Any Catholics who vote for candidates who stand for abortion, illicit stem-cell research or euthanasia suffer the same fateful consequences."

By raising the specter of withholding Holy Communion from supporters of Kerry and other politicians who back abortion rights, Sheridan has waded deeper into the 2004 political debate than any other church leader. But not that much deeper. Denver Archbishop Charles Chaput has written that "real Catholics" should determine whether candidates are in tune with church teaching on abortion and "vote accordingly." Bishop Raymond Burke of St. Louis has barred Kerry from accepting Communion, and bishops in Boston, New Orleans and Portland, Oregon, have suggested that it is inappropriate for Kerry and other Catholic candidates who support abortion and gay rights to partake in the central ritual of the church. Things have gotten so hot that Ono Ekeh, the former program coordinator for African-American Catholics at the US Conference of Catholic Bishops, says he was asked to resign after conservative Catholics complained that he had founded a Catholics For Kerry group and maintained a personal weblog that advanced the view that "being a Catholic and a Democrat are not mutually exclusive."

Of course, millions of Catholics—including Kerry, Senate

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minority leader Tom Daschle and House minority leader Nancy Pelosi—are Democrats. Catholics, who make up roughly 26 percent of the voting-age population, favored Al Gore over George Bush by a 50-to-47 margin in 2000, according to exit polls. And strong support from Catholics in eastern Iowa helped Kerry resurrect his campaign this year with a big win in that state's caucuses. But the charge that Kerry is a "bad Catholic" and that it is morally wrong to vote for him, or for other Democrats who are social liberals, could be a factor in battleground states like Pennsylvania, Ohio, New Mexico and Arizona, which have substantial Catholic populations. Thus, when bishops go after Kerry and other pro-choice Democrats, they are playing political hardball. Forty-eight Democratic members of Congress—all of them Catholics and several of them opponents of abortion—signed a letter to the head of a bishops' task force that said threats to deny Communion to politicians who support abortion rights was "miring the Church in partisan politics." Father Robert Drinan, a former Congressman from Massachusetts who now teaches law at Georgetown, was more blunt: "They think they're Caesar. They want to tell people how to vote," Drinan said of Sheridan and like-minded church leaders. "They're really a minority among the bishops. They're the extremists. But they get the publicity, and they are making it appear that the only thing Catholics care about is abortion."

To be sure, the church hierarchy is against abortion. But it is, as well, critical of the doctrine of pre-emptive war, the nuclear arms race, capital punishment and the widening gap between rich and poor. Father Andrew Greeley, a sociologist and author who is one of the country's most prominent Catholic thinkers, asks, "Are these bishops willing to deny the Eucharist to Catholic politicians who support the death penalty or the Iraq war? And if not, why not? Moreover, will they tell Catholics that it is a sin to support an unjust war and to vote for a candidate who is responsible for such a war? And again, if not, why not?" Similarly, Sister Joan Chittister, a past president of the Leadership Conference of Women Religious, argues that "Kerry has denounced the policies of unilateralism and pre-emptive war. He promises to renew US alliances around the world so we are seen as an international partner not a bully. Those are very Catholic positions." And the independent *National Catholic Reporter* weighed in with the view, "Kerry might be a 'bad Catholic' (or a 'good' one for that matter) and still be an exemplary President; or a failed one. Personal piety and religious observance are not prerequisites of national leadership."

Critics of Archbishop Chaput, Bishop Sheridan and other conservative Catholic leaders say that by focusing single-mindedly on abortion and neglecting issues of war and poverty, anti-Kerry churchmen fail not only to do justice to the whole body of church teaching but also abandon the principles enunciated by America's only Catholic President, John Kennedy, who declared in 1960, "I believe in an America...where no religious body seeks to impose its will directly or indirectly upon the general populace, or the public acts of its officials." Indeed, Greeley suggests, the bishops appear to be "doing the Republican National Committee's work for it." JOHN NICHOLS

CALVIN TRILLIN

On the Rupture of Relations Between Ahmad Chalabi and the United States of America

The learned Wolfowitz and Perle, it seems,
Made Chalabi the hero of their dreams.
Yes, all the Sissy Hawks were glad to sup
On cockamamie tales that he served up.
In triumph back in Baghdad he would pose—
A Charles de Gaulle, with more expensive clothes.
When Ahmad's hopes for power took a dive,
He thought he'd turn against us to survive.
We trashed his house, and now the man is vexed.
Pray tell: Will Wolfowitz's house be next?

No Politician Left Behind

Education is always about politics—in the best and worst senses. In the best sense what happens in our schools is an expression of our beliefs and values, what we want the next generation to be like. But education is also political in the partisan sense—as politicians of all stripes seek to rally their troops around schooling practices, to tie other political agendas into our agendas for schools. Social promotion, bilingual education, phonics, "new math"—all are issues that resonate with different audiences for reasons other than those that directly concern teachers, parents and kids. Phonics is seen as "right-wing authoritarianism," social promotion as "permissive liberalism" (and depicted as the scourge of New York City schools, despite the fact that almost half the city's children have been entering high school at least a year over-age for decades) and so forth. Reality often gets lost, and kids suffer in ways neither opponents nor proponents had in mind.

So along comes No Child Left Behind, and from right to left, everyone climbs aboard. It was, after all, an extension of a policy idea hatched under Bush Senior, pursued under Clinton and replicated in many states—the premise of which is that frequent testing will solve educational problems. And in fact the focus on "results," not "opportunities," echoes older liberal, not conservative, themes. Yet had anyone read the bill with care, it would have been hard not to fault it on almost every ground, except perhaps the high aspirations embedded in the title.

NCLB proposes to accomplish a statistical impossibility (that all children score in the top twenty-fifth percentile); it raises false expectations; it's built on an illusion that tests alone can—and should—measure worthwhile standards; that schools can do it all; that progress comes in steady increments; that penalties will mo-

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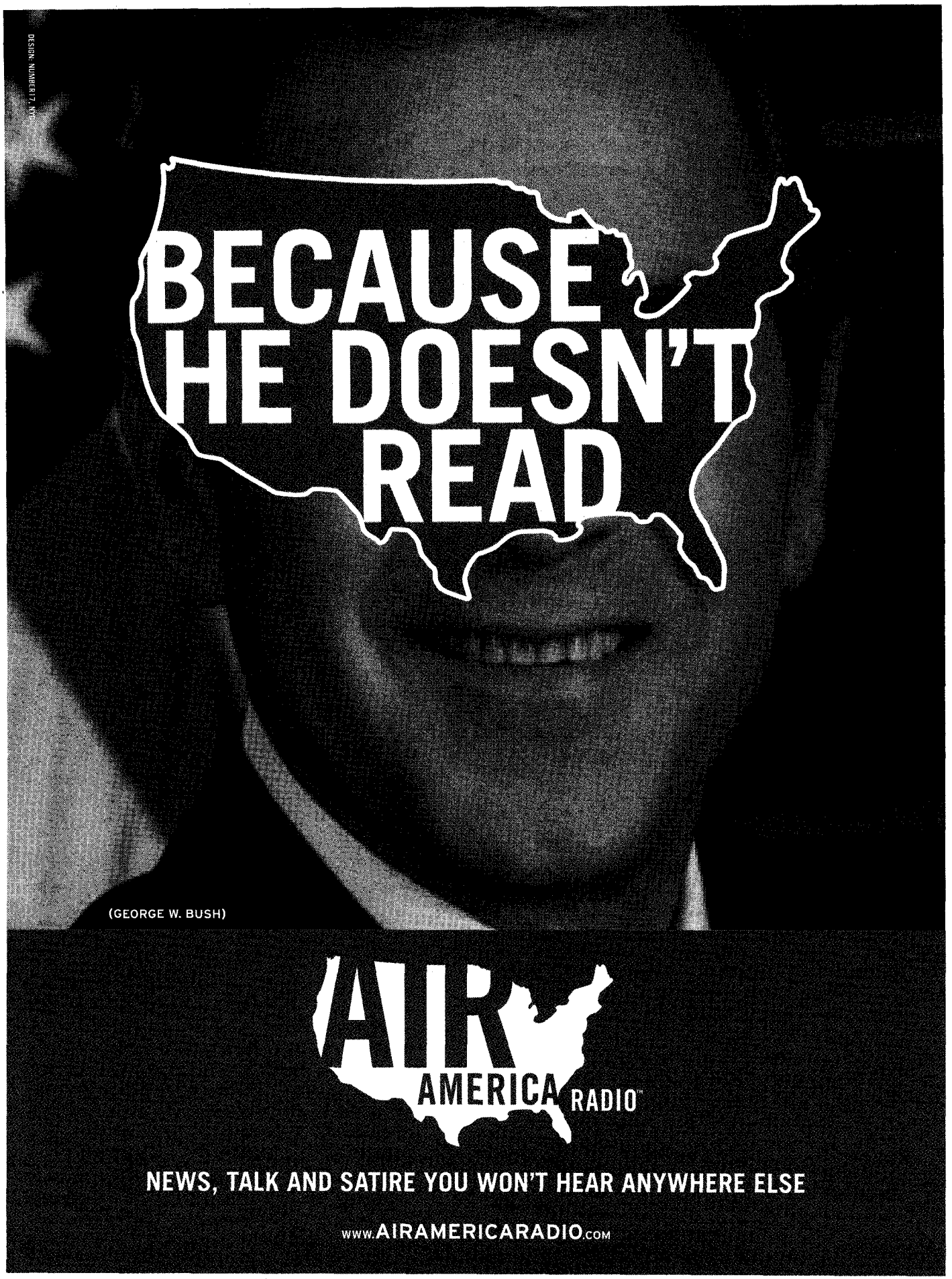
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COMMENT

tivate children and teachers; that lack of money is a mere excuse; that a single nationwide system is part of the American dream; and, finally, that schools can do it all. The law literally dictates the books we are allowed to use on a national basis, not to mention the pedagogy for teaching literacy and, coming soon, math. Before long, until eighth grade, little else will get taught at all.

Yet virtually no high-powered public figures, nor any important leaders of either party (including John Kerry), have done more than demur from this or that aspect of this preposterous bill. Meanwhile, those closest to the action (teachers, principals and superintendents organizations, as well as local school boards) are in almost unanimous opposition—but quietly, as they are fearful of being seen as whiners, a defensive coalition of self-interests.

What is inexcusable is not just the "achievement gap" on tests but the gaps you can see with your own eyes: the gaps in graduation rates, which have been disguised for years by the very folks who support NCLB; the real dropout rates; the attendance data; the condition of buildings and playgrounds; and more. When we know of solutions that are promising, we're told: too expensive; utopian. It's easy for those with money to say it doesn't take money to educate all children well—they can always fall back on rich-family-sponsored education after school, on weekends and during the summer, or choose to spend two or three times as much just on the school day itself, as wealthy communities do.

We are just plain lied to, and then shocked that our education czar was the perpetrator of such lies. For example, when Houston's graduation and dropout data—put forward when Education Secretary Rod Paige was superintendent—was revealed to be blatantly false, the myth of the "Texas miracle" should have been forever put to rest, but the scandal disappeared from the headlines within days and it remains alive and well. We open two new schools in Boston under conditions that defy all the literature on best practice, on the grounds that what we know works we can't afford—like starting a new school a grade or two at a time, keeping school size small. No one dares insist that we create professional time for teachers and parents to work together. Instead of improving the education we provide teachers before and after they enter the profession, we've decided that we can fill the need by quick emergency routes. Teacher preparation today is more and more a question of program-specific training, often conducted by private vendors, who implement their prescribed material in prescribed ways to minimize costs. Moreover, the wisdom of teachers and parents is disregarded—often by the very people who loudly lament the erosion of adult authority in today's society.

To add insult to injury, we use as our only measure of academic performance the one tool that most reliably reflects family assets: standardized paper-and-pencil tests. And the more we reduce taxes on the rich and rely on local taxpayers to fund schools, the more likely we are to have the cheapest and most unreliable kinds of tests—which makes an even further mockery of the idea of closing gaps. As Richard Rothstein reminds us in his new book, *Class and Schools: Using Social, Economic and Educational Reform to Close the Black-White Achievement Gap*, if we truly wanted to raise test scores, the route we've chosen is in the long run the most utopian, meaning undoable. We spend $50 billion a year on schooling K through 12 and three times that this year alone on the Iraq war—and yet are told we "can't afford" what the experts say might make a difference. In the end, standardized tests will largely continue to measure the other gaps in life.

Does that mean we should excuse the poor performance of so many schools? Not at all. I know schools can be transformative—even for those at the bottom of the ladder. But the transformation that counts is not going to lead us to a world in which everyone is above average, much less in the top quarter on any standardized measuring rod. It will depend on building the kinds of communities in which adults are expected to exercise judgment in public and accountable ways, and in which families, students and adults have sufficient time to learn from each other what is needed to educate all children well—and the resources necessary to make this possible.

Meanwhile, pressure mounts to replace public schools with the private marketplace. As we turn more and more to private armies because we don't want to face what it would take to recruit public ones, so too with our schools. The promotion of the idea that private is better than public not only impoverishes our common dreams—it is also clearly untrue. We encourage parents (and kids) to distrust the people they most rely on, under the assumption that they can't be good enough if they are public. We increasingly provide monies to support the not-so-hidden dream of the right: to place the education of our young into private, for-profit hands.

Yes, the defeat of Bush is a necessity for the future of public education, but it won't rest easy in the hands of a Kerry administration either. Better funding for a host of bad practices won't improve matters. It's just that the fight for good schooling will be easier to mount, and the wild explosion of gaps in every other domain of children's lives may be brought to a halt. Oddly enough, what matters more, for strictly schooling "outcomes," is not what happens inside our schools but inside our society. On those questions there is little doubt which candidate will be better for our kids. We need to remember that the larger struggle is also critical if we truly intend to leave no child behind. DEBORAH MEIER

Deborah Meier, co-principal of Mission Hill School in Boston, is the author of many books on education, including In Schools We Trust.

NATION NOTES

Arthur C. Danto, *Nation* art critic and the Johnsonian Professor Emeritus of Philosophy at Columbia University, was awarded an honorary Doctor of Letters degree by the university at its 2004 commencement. Columbia cited Danto for having "allowed us to see art through the lens of your large and generous philosophical mind," as well as for "your deep and liberal humanity" and "your remarkable joining of art and philosophy in a relationship of mutual enrichment."

David Cole, *Nation* legal affairs correspondent, has received a Hugh M. Hefner First Amendment Award for *Enemy Aliens: Double Standards and Constitutional Freedoms in the War on Terrorism.*

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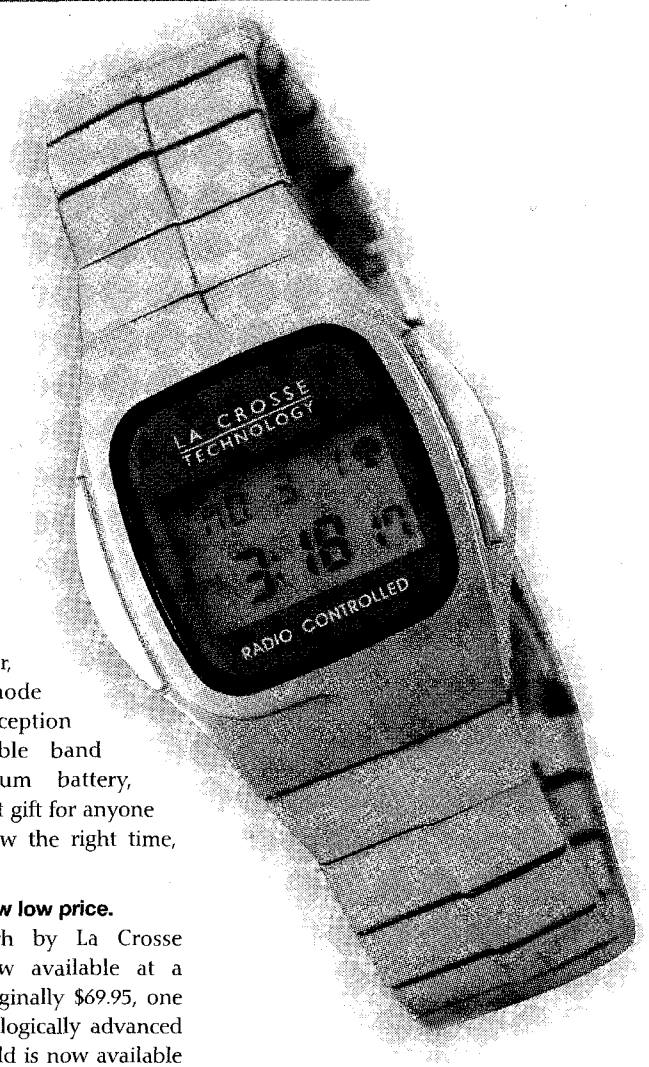

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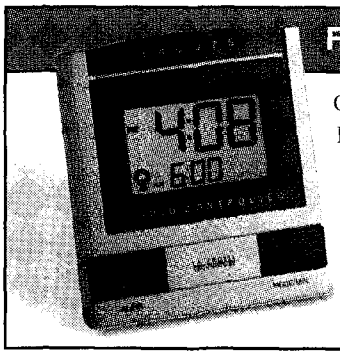

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JONATHAN SCHELL

Politicizing the War

Many people (mostly Republicans) say (mostly to Democrats) that it's wrong to "politicize" the war in Iraq. But politicizing the war is exactly what should now occur. To be precise, those who oppose the war should politicize it as much as the Bush Administration has already done. Politics is not just the activity of politicians; it is a democratic people's chief means of making basic decisions about its future. Such decisions—whether the country's foreign policy will be imperial or democratic, whether the constitutional system will remain intact, whether the United States stands for or against torture—are now before the electorate. In any case, it seems clear from the President's speech at the Army War College on May 24 that no basic change in US Iraq policy is likely before November 2. On the other hand, the entire direction of American politics is at stake on that day. To point this out is not to be indifferent to the welfare of the people of Iraq. For the shape of their future will also depend chiefly on the outcome of the election.

The beginning of realism is to acknowledge that the next step in the President's policy—his promise of "full sovereignty" to Iraq—is a cosmetic operation. The story of the war has been one of official claims or predictions dissolving upon contact with fact. Let's see how quickly I can run through the overfamiliar list: Weapons of mass destruction in Saddam's Iraq? Not there. Iraqi ties with Al Qaeda before the war? Missing. Democracy in Iraq? Drowned in blood at Abu Ghraib. Transformation of the whole Middle East? For the worse.

The promise of "full sovereignty" is next in this series (coming along just in time to refresh the litany). But in one way it's different. You had to wait some months for the previous mirages to dissipate, but this one is dead before arrival. It is a phrase advanced in the teeth of multiple admissions by the Administration itself, which has let it be known that the new "sovereign" will not: possess authority over either American forces or its own; be able to pass legislation; control its own news media; make decisions about the economy of the country. Neither will it enjoy the authority of the "interim constitution" recently promised by Bush but now simply forgotten. Arguably, the new group will possess less authority even than the powerless existing "governing council." "Withdrawal of power" might be a better description than "transfer of power" for what is about to happen—except that the governing council lacked real power in the first place. As for the election promised in January, this will be as uncertain, once the US election in November is out of way, as the interim constitution turned out to be.

What is at stake on June 30 has little to do with any reality in Iraq. In all important respects, American policy will remain the same. The Coalition Provisional Authority will be renamed an "embassy." (The President said, "Our embassy in Baghdad will have the same purpose as any other American embassy." This is true if the comparison is to, say, the American Embassy in Chile in 1971.) Some 138,000—or more—troops will remain in the country, using, in the President's ominous words, "measured force or overwhelming force." The electricity, water and oil will stop and start as usual. The fighting will continue. Kurds, Shiites and Sunnis will jockey for power. The prison at Abu Ghraib will be torn down, but a new "modern maximum security prison"—America's latest gift to Iraqi democracy—will replace it (as if a building, not the people in it, had been torturing Iraqi prisoners.)

The changes that *will* occur are all in the realm of appearances. But they are not, for that reason, insignificant, for as the White House well knows, it is appearances that may determine the November election. The trick for the Administration is to create, for a period of four months, an illusion that American policy is working. In this effort, there are at least four distinct fronts. One is the United Nations. Theoretically, its man Lakhdar Brahimi is choosing the country's next government. In actuality, he has become a key figure, however unintentionally, in George W. Bush's election effort. Now the United States and Britain have placed before the Security Council a draft resolution inviting the UN to give its blessing to the new order in Iraq. The UN is in danger of creating an aura of legitimacy and international control where none in fact exist. The draft permits the Security Council to "review"—not "renew"—the presence of the American and other foreign troops after a year. That is, the United States, wielder of a veto in the Council, can keep its troops in Iraq as long as it wants.

The second front is the political leadership in Iraq, which is under intense pressure by the Administration to play its part. What happens to defectors was recently illustrated by the treatment of the Pentagon's former favorite Iraqi, Ahmad Chalabi, who made the mistake of turning against the occupation, stating, "Sovereignty is not to be given, it is to be seized." With a brutality that is the hallmark of this Administration's approach to any opposition, an Iraqi force accompanied by Americans looted his office and home, breaking up furniture and smashing family photographs.

The third front is the American media. Its members should awaken to the fact that every time they use phrases like "handing over sovereignty" or "transition to democracy" they are misleading the public just as thoroughly as so many did when they accepted at face value the Administration's claims that Saddam Hussein possessed weapons of mass destruction.

A final front is the Administration's Democratic opposition, which is hobbled by Senator John Kerry's own "stay the course" position. Perhaps he is simply following the old political rule that when your opponent is destroying himself by his own efforts, you should stay out of the way. However, by failing to challenge the President on the war, he risks himself becoming a kind of unwilling accessory to the White House propaganda maneuvers.

The UN should not abandon the people of Iraq; neither, of course, should the leadership of Iraq; American reporters should not become partisans of the Democratic Party; and John Kerry should not adopt any view on the war simply to bait his rival. But all of them should be aware that to whatever extent they give credence to the charade on June 30, they are above all else assisting in the re-election of the President.

Jonathan Schell's A Hole in the World, *a compilation of his "Letter From Ground Zero" columns, has just been published by Nation Books.*

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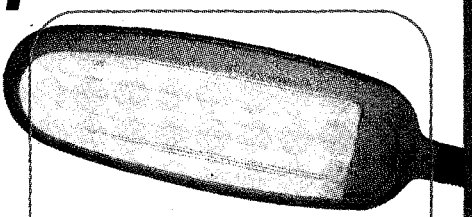

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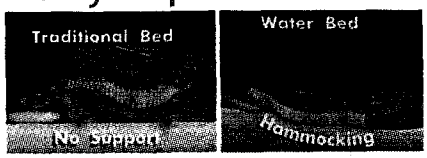

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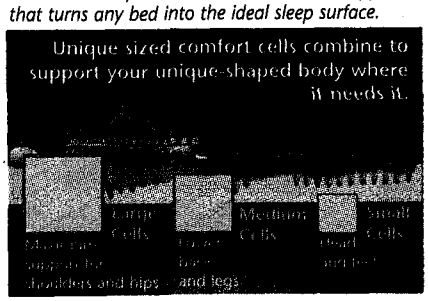
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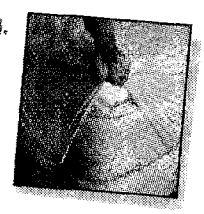

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ALEXANDER COCKBURN

NYT: 'Maybe We Did Screw Up a Little'

On May 26 the *New York Times* finally hitched up its pants, took a deep breath and issued an editorial declaration of moderate regret for its role in boosting the case for war on Iraq. There was a bit of dutiful trumpet-tootling at the start ("we found an enormous amount of journalism that we are proud of.... accurate reflection of the state of our knowledge at the time...."), and then a manly confession that perhaps, maybe, conceivably, the *Times*'s reporting was a shade less than perfect.

"We have found a number of instances of coverage that was not as rigorous as it should have been. In some cases, information that was controversial then, and seems questionable now, was insufficiently qualified or allowed to stand unchallenged." Given that the paper printed tens of thousands of words of willful balderdash from 2001 to 2003, the admission leaves something to be desired, but that's scarcely surprising.

Remember this one? "Passages of some articles also posed a problem of tone. In place of a tone of journalistic detachment from our sources, we occasionally used language that adopted the sense of alarm that was contained in official reports." That was the *Times* issuing an exceptionally graceless admission in 2000 that it might have done better in the Wen Ho Lee affair. The collapse of the government's case against the Los Alamos scientist was one of the greatest humiliations of a national newspaper in the history of journalism. One had to go back to the publication by the London *Times* of the 1887 Pigott forgery libeling Charles Stewart Parnell, the Irish nationalist hero, to find an equivalent debacle.

The *New York Times* played a decisive role in sparking the persecution of Wen Ho Lee, his solitary confinement under threat of execution, his denial of bail, the loss of his job, the anguish endured by the scientist and his family. Yet the most it could manage then were a few strangled croaks, wishing it had portrayed his character in greater depth. It never had words of specific admonition for the instigators of Lee's persecution, reporters Jeff Gerth and James Risen and the columnist William Safire.

It's the same now. Nowhere in the editorial note of May 26 does the difficult name Judith Miller crop up. The editors cite, as examples of inadequate reporting, five stories from 2001 to 2003, without naming authors. Miller wrote or co-wrote three of them, including a grotesque piece on December 20, 2001, in which she rolled out a liar called Adnan Ihsan Saeed al-Haideri, who had poured into her delighted ear an account of how he'd worked on nuclear, biological and chemical war facilities "in underground wells, private villas and under the Saddam Hussein Hospital."

"If verified," Miller wrote, al-Haideri's "allegations would provide ammunition to officials within the Bush administration who have been arguing that Mr. Hussein should be driven from power." Note the sedate phrase "if verified." Those allegations never were verified, but Miller still had al-Haideri in play at the start of 2003, a fact tastefully passed over in the May 26 note. She used him to attack Hans Blix and the UN inspectors. "Intelligence officials," she wrote, "said that some of the most valuable information has come from...al-Haideri."

The modified May 26 climb-down is 1,100 words long. Here is no methodical review, such as the 7,200-word, unsparing scrutiny of Jayson Blair's insignificant fabrications. Given the fact that the *Times* helped launch a war, now shaping up to be a world-historical disaster, proportionality surely demands something the length of the *Times*'s stories on the selling of another war, the Pentagon Papers.

The editors find no room to examine a story Miller wrote with Michael Gordon, another seasoned fabricator. Their September 8, 2002, article, "U.S. Says Hussein Intensifies Quest for A-Bomb Parts," was mostly nonsense about those notorious aluminum tubes, though there was a cameo role for another defector, a rogue offered to readers under the pseudonym Ahmed al-Shemri, who told Miller and Gordon Iraq was "developing, producing and storing chemical agents.... 'All of Iraq is one large storage facility,' said Shemri. Asked about his allegations, US officials said they believed these reports were accurate."

Then Miller and Gordon wrote some of the most brazenly misleading lines in the history of war propaganda: "After insisting that it had never weaponized bacteria or filled warheads, [Iraq] again belatedly acknowledged having done so after Hussein Kamel, Hussein's brother-in-law [*sic*], defected to Jordan with evidence about the scale of the germ warfare program." What's missing from this brisk evocation of Hussein Kamel's debriefings by the UNSCOM inspectors, the CIA and MI6 in the summer of 1995? Kamel told them all, with corroboration from aides who had also defected, that on Saddam Hussein's orders his son-in-law had destroyed all of Iraq's WMDs years earlier, right after the Gulf War. If Miller and Gordon cite some of the debrief, why not all?

This brings us to the now popular scapegoat for the fictions about WMDs, touted by *Times* editors, by other reporters and by US intelligence agencies. It was all the fault of the smooth-tongued Ahmad Chalabi, now fallen from grace and stigmatized as a cat's-paw of Iranian intelligence. But was there ever a moment when Chalabi's motives and the defectors he efficiently mass-produced should not have been questioned by experienced reporters, editors and intelligence analysts? Furthermore, it wasn't all Chalabi's doing. We have yet to see an apology from *The New Yorker* for publishing Jeffrey Goldberg's carefully wrought fantasies about the supposed links between Saddam and Al Qaeda. These were among the most effective pieces of propaganda, widely flourished by the Bush Administration. Chalabi had nothing to do with that, nor with most of the "slam dunk" case on WMDs invoked by CIA Director Tenet and dutifully parroted in the press.

Oh, there's plenty more apologizing for the *Times* to do, starting with its part in trying to destroy Gary Webb for his 1996 series in the *San Jose Mercury News* on the CIA, the *contras* and cocaine smuggling, a saga in which his reporting was ultimately vindicated. The *Times* never returned to the scene of that crime to pin a regrets note on the corpse. It even refused to print Webb's letter correcting shameful distortions of his career by Iver Peterson. ■

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PATRICIA J. WILLIAMS

Slow Motion

DIARY OF A MAD LAW PROFESSOR

The Justice Department recently announced its intention to reopen the Emmett Till case. Although the federal statute of limitations has long since expired, the federal files will be made available to assist with the State of Mississippi's promised criminal prosecution of perhaps as many as ten new suspects. For almost fifty years the case has stood as an unfortunate marker of unfinished business and was credited with having lent the civil rights movement its most powerful moral rallying point. The two men originally accused were never convicted, despite lots of evidence. Although there were always credible allegations that more than just two people were involved in Till's abduction and execution, such reports were until now dismissed as "rumor" and needless incitement. It was only after the exhaustive, independent efforts of documentary filmmakers Stanley Nelson and Keith Beauchamp that the case was resurrected.

Reactions to the news of this renewed prosecution have varied from "let sleeping dogs lie"; to a kind of muted cynicism about whether, if it happened today, it would take another fifty years before we got serious about punishing those who did it; to celebration of the potential for "closure"; to delight that the wheels of justice, while grinding exceeding slow, are going round and round just as nicely as you please.

I guess I'm in the camp that believes that justice unreasonably delayed is most likely justice miscarried. At the same time, I recognize that the culture of Mississippi and of the nation has changed significantly for the better as a direct result of this case; the very fact that two African-American filmmakers found a wide audience for their work is testament to that transformation. But after all these years I wonder if "closure" is really what we should be looking for. We would do better to try to utilize the memory—respectfully—so that it does not harden or haunt us in unbidden ways. I think that's what it means to witness our history, or to never forget. And so I ponder the ingredients of such prolonged inaction about so egregious a wrong.

First, Till's murder was committed against the backdrop of a two-tiered justice system. The majority of the Deep South felt a kind of rightness in vigilantism. Many regretted the brutality, of course, but still thought that night riders or lynch mobs were somehow "justified" in acting above the law and that "the bad ones" (uppity blacks, Catholics, Jews, wanton women) were beneath it. "Our" laws, the laws of civilized "good people," were not conceived to "handle" the terrifying threat that disorderly "animals" posed to the gentlemanly foundations of the Southern lifestyle. Hence the perceived necessity for hangings, beatings, burnings, rape, torture, sexual humiliation, mutilation, dismemberment, separation, segregation and general dehumanization. Teaching the barbarians a lesson was dirty business, but always in service to the highest ideals. It was—it remains—a cliché: "Southern justice" meant something other than constitutional due process.

Second, Jim Crow's shadow justice system permitted unchecked forms of punishment, inventive destructiveness with no accountability. Crimes like Till's murder were a great big public secret, in that no one could talk fully or frankly about moral limits even if everybody knew all there was to know. Aside from the obvious dangers, there was also a terrible innocence in such a culture of privatized violence. It has always been so: If those over whom we lord are too afraid of saying what they think, we become ignorant, naïve, flattered into arrogance. And arrogance is false shelter; we forget that we are watched—not only by our victims or by the random camera but by our frightened children, and by the traumatized humanity in even the worst of us, a humanity that splits off, deadened and appalled.

Third, the reality of a parallel, ungoverned secondary system of retribution destroys not only the autonomy of the subordinated community but also the very sovereignty of the state or nation in whose behalf the vigilantism is exacted. It corrodes the legitimacy of formal governance structures like the judiciary and renders politics a farce.

These days, lots of people are debating analogies between the brutality at Abu Ghraib or other military prisons and the brutality of the old South. Here's my thought: If analogies are to be made, let us focus on the consequences of any dual justice system, in any historical context, and as a matter of principle rather than degree. We don't have to settle whether Lynndie England is exactly the same as Saddam Hussein or the Nazis or Bull Connor. Instead, just as a matter of logical form, let us put the USA Patriot Act next to the US Constitution and consider the deficiencies, the unlimited license of detentions without charge or lawyers or independent observers. Let us consider the state of our own maximum security prisons when we hear our President promise to build the Iraqi people a brand-new, American-style facility on top of Abu Ghraib—"Camp Redemption" some in the Administration propose to rename it. Let us listen to the constant comparisons of Iraq's citizens to "ghetto dwellers" who must be taught to "take responsibility" for their welfare and wean themselves of dependence on handouts from Uncle Sam. Let us think about the proposed sovereignty giving Iraqis responsibility for every last bit of the chaos, but no veto power over US military action within their borders.

Most important, let us consider how much our own sovereignty is reduced when so many of those who act in our name are part of a global federation of "private contractors"—mercenaries forming the world's largest private army: a league of soldiers culled from apartheid's machine, defunct dictatorships and the Soviet Union as well as from America's own stock of prison wardens, security guards, gun aficionados and militia members. Yes, I know that many are skilled and good-hearted, just making a living while protecting our virtue. But it is the lack of oversight that must concern us. If we worry about free-floating uranium and stateless Islamists, then we must have the good conscience to worry as well about our own loose cannons: these soldiers for hire, or soldiers for fun, or soldiers whose belief systems we have yet to fathom. Our legacy will be written by their actions. ■

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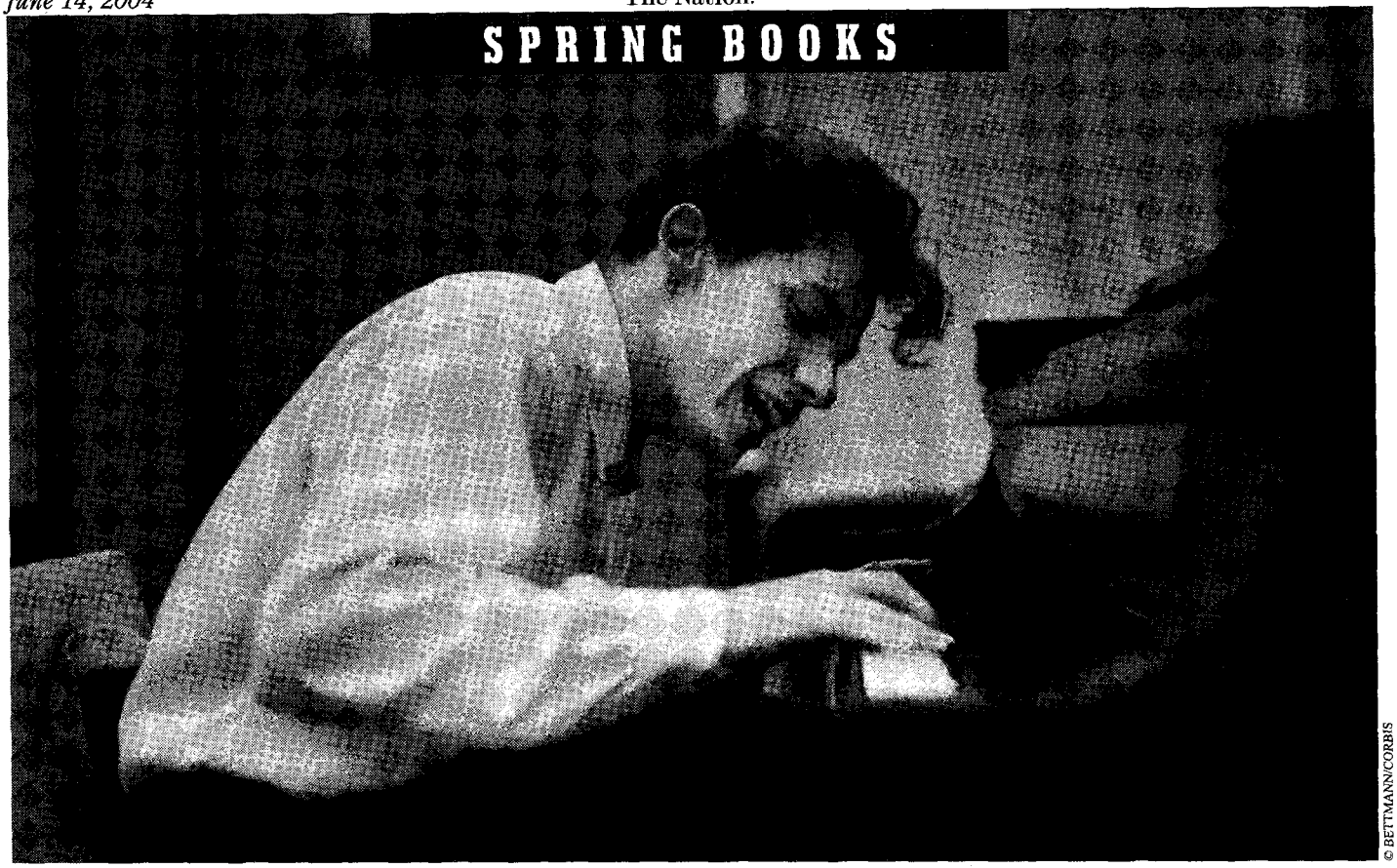

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Truly, Madly, Deeply

PAUL GRIFFITHS

WONDROUS STRANGE: The Life and Art of Glenn Gould.
By Kevin Bazzana. Oxford. 528 pp. $35.

It's only a little fughetta in C minor, a piece J.S. Bach wrote into a notebook he was keeping for the purpose of teaching his eldest son. When Wanda Landowska played it, on one of the records with which she pioneered the twentieth-century revival of the harpsichord, she skipped through it in not much more than a minute, which seems about right. Here in this piano recording, though, it's twice as long, twice as slow. We hear every detail. The left hand starts, setting out the subject, which is hardly more than an up-down scale pattern until a tight little motif arrives, to be heard three times. Then the right hand enters—necessarily, this being a fugue, to echo what has happened. The two hands become two voices talking to each other, and the left now has to be the accompaniment to the right. But since the right is merely repeating what the left has already said, it would be hard to say which is in control. Neither sounds cramped by the other. Neither seems to have any limits, only a firm resilience at its center. Both sing. The tempo is deliberate, and the notes are slightly separated, as if each were a distinct event, but still both lines are unfolding a continuous melody. Halfway through, the left hand comes up with what sounds like a nursery rhyme. Later, the right keeps cresting through a slight deceleration and spilling over. Nothing is irrelevant, and nothing that these two singing hands project is unconsidered. There's another voice, too, a kind of baritone groan that mostly follows the lower line, urgent but distant—urgent, perhaps, precisely because it is distant,

Paul Griffiths writes on classical music for the New York Times. *He is the author of, among other books,* Modern Music: The Avant-Garde Since 1945 *(George Braziller).*

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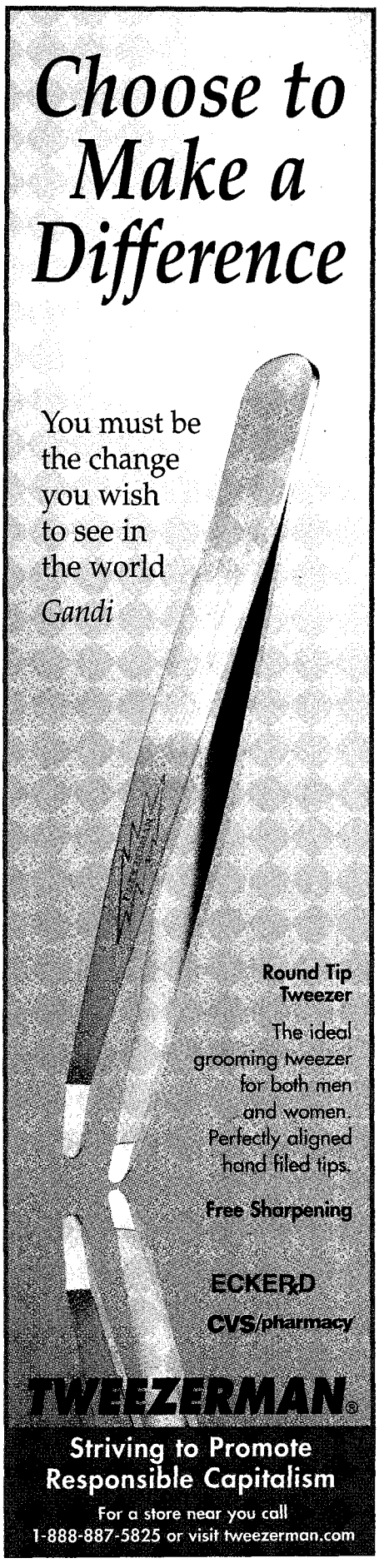
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excluded from the hands' communion with the music.

This is Glenn Gould, in one of his last recordings, made two and a half years before he died in 1982 at the age of 50. As Kevin Bazzana points out at the beginning of *Wondrous Strange*, his supremely thorough and illuminating biography, Gould has endured. Virtually everything he recorded is available on CD, selling better than it did when he was alive. He has been the subject of novels, poems and films, and of scholarly studies that notably include an earlier book by Bazzana, *Glenn Gould: The Performer in the Work*, a critical analysis of his recordings. Like no other classical performer, Gould goes on being taught, debated, adored and written off. He has ascended to that mythic heaven whose twin temples are the classroom and the chatroom, where he can be almost anything the worshiper desires: a doomed idol of popular culture (Bazzana suggests comparisons with James Dean and Elvis Presley in Gould's dazzling entry into public consciousness when his first Columbia recording, of Bach's *Goldberg Variations*, was released in 1956) or an esoteric philosopher at the keyboard, a knot of hang-ups or a man who simply used the freedom of success to create his life as he wanted it, a pianist of extraordinary gifts derailed by the imp of the perverse or an artist fulfilling a consistent yet constantly widening vision of creativity in the electronic age, an inhibited homosexual or a hermetic straight man, a wonder or a clown, a tragedy or a triumph.

Wisely and skillfully, Bazzana avoids making any of these choices. Unlike previous biographers, he is not trying to explain Gould—though he does, helpfully, give his subject a context. Gould is revealed here in his Canadian-ness, heir to a scrubbed Presbyterian morality (his mother's Scottish background was always more important to him than his paternal fur-trading forebears), living in a country that was beginning to find its cultural feet during his youth, aware of the North as the great wilderness beyond. His debts to his one conservatory professor, Alberto Guerrero, are also recognized for the first time. But Bazzana is conscious of dealing with an extraordinary individual, one whose extraordinariness was bound up with his mercuriality and multiplicity. It is a Gouldian strength of this book that it acknowledges paradox, can find performances at once "refreshing" and "maddening." Bazzana is also a little Gould-like in telling a compelling story as a succession of discrete moments, in some of which he steps outside chronology to consider abiding traits, preferences and quirks.

Of these last there were many. Having a horror of catching cold, Gould wore winter clothing at the height of summer, would leave a restaurant at the faint suspicion of a draft and dosed himself liberally with whatever medicines he could persuade his several physicians to prescribe. (By a painful irony, it seems to have been an ordinary cold that brought on the stroke that killed him.) While playing the piano, he used a little chair his father had adapted for him in 1953, from which he could hunch over the instrument. This chair traveled with him to Russia in 1957, shuttled back and forth with him on the train between Toronto, his hometown throughout his life, and New York, where he regularly recorded in the late 1950s and '60s, and was still in use, almost seatless, when he died. He ate only one meal a day, otherwise sustaining himself with cookies, crackers, tea, coffee and soft drinks. Usually he would eat by himself. He needed friends, but much preferred them at the end of a telephone line, over which he might read a lecture he was preparing or play a tape he was editing, in calls lasting hours.

Bazzana concludes, from his comprehensive study of the archives and from interviews with numerous friends, colleagues and acquaintances (appropriately conducted mostly by phone), that Gould was aware of the cachet of being labeled an eccentric. He attracted publicity. He also diverted curiosity. Behave like a recluse and people will steer clear. Act normal and they will start to ask questions about how you relax and—as happened to the young Gould—whether you have a girlfriend. (On this matter Bazzana deduces that Gould did have a few intense relationships with women, but with such women, he remarks ruefully, as are least likely to confide in biographers.) This does not mean that Gould's oddity was put on (though it could, on occasion, be put off): His hypochondria and summertime overdressing went back to his childhood, and surely caused him more inconvenience and even discomfort than mere affectations would have merited. But if he was indeed wondrous strange, he was also wondrous logical. His peculiarities, and the advertising of his peculiarities, all helped him satisfy or validate his most pressing need from the world: isolation.

Logic, too, determined his most crucial act of separation, from the concert platform. His *Goldberg* recording made him a star at the age of 23, and during the next three years he was on the international circuit. He may have canceled more concerts than he gave, but, quite apart from his Russian tour, he appeared at the Salzburg Festival, elsewhere in Europe and in many North American cities.

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Then he let his engagements dwindle. Then he stopped taking any. On April 10, 1964, in Los Angeles, he shuffled off the stage after a recital of Bach, Beethoven and Hindemith, and never returned. Henceforth he would be heard only through loudspeakers, and seen only as an image on an LP cover.

He may have removed himself because of personal fears—of crowds (and their germs), of unknown hotel rooms (and their drafts), of air travel (so productive of both)—but he had, too, an artistic rationale. Recording had changed the nature of music-making. Not only could musicians now give their very best to an almost unlimited audience, but listeners could choose when to hear a recording, and could do so repeatedly, in privacy. Musical communication had become more elevated, more secure and more intimate. It was also more permanent. Recordings could and should now be judged on their own merits, not as approaches to some ideal of performance under the defunct conditions of the concert hall. By 1964 there were already several different versions of any standard piece, and so new recordings would have to justify themselves by their novelty, even their eccentricity, always provided there was some musical reason for doing things differently (and Gould was a master at finding wild purposes). Also, there was no reason for performers and record producers not to use the medium creatively, in editing and even in manipulating the acoustic. Exactly as film had developed its own techniques, aesthetics and personnel, branching away from the theater, so recorded music would become an art form in its own right.

It has not quite worked out that way. The number of front-rank musicians who have withdrawn from live performance in favor of recording is still what it was forty years ago: one. Recordings made as studio composites, from manifold takes, are in retreat; many musicians and record producers prefer the "live recording," conveying a performance, notionally unedited, that was given in front of an audience. So bent on seclusion, Gould has remained alone on his career path.

Were he still alive (he would be only 71), his apartness might by now be even more striking: He was, as Bazzana notes, "in transition." One problem he faced was that of burning up his repertory, for where a concert pianist could return again and again to favorite pieces, Gould as a recording artist had to be constantly moving on. He almost never went back to offer a second version: One great exception was his return to the *Goldberg Variations*—in 1981, twenty-five years after his first recording came out—which eerily gave his life a pattern. Just as Bach's work is a great journey that arrives back at its starting place—with a repetition at the end of the opening "Aria," whose potentialities have now been fully extended—so Gould's life as a recording musician ended as it had begun, his death coming the month after the second *Goldberg* disc was released. For one who was determined to be in control, to the extent of scripting his broadcast interviews (which therefore, as much as his recordings, disturb our judgment of what is natural, casual or incidental, forcing us to hear intention everywhere), a perfectly timed departure might not seem out of the question. And though death was not what he had in mind, he clearly felt his life as a pianist was reaching a terminus. In the seventeen months after the *Goldberg* remake he recorded only a Brahms album and the sonata by Richard Strauss, while all around him doors were closing. The artists in charge at his record company were being replaced by businessmen. He was losing the Toronto studio where he had been recording since 1971. He was drawing away from Steinway and moving tentatively toward Yamaha. He was worried that age was beginning to limit his technique. He was fully aware of reaching the end of the keyboard repertory that meant most to him.

Of course, he could have looked a little harder at what he had rejected. His Schumann, his Chopin or his Debussy—evenly articulated, displayed as counterpoint, no doubt with some pieces bewilderingly fast or slow—might have been as refreshing/maddening as everything else he recorded. He could also have considered music by contemporaries other than the three Canadians he recorded: Bazzana informs us that he found Pierre Boulez's second sonata "intellectually intriguing but cold," but he might have had a different opinion of the sonata by Jean Barraqué or of pieces by Elliott Carter and Brian Ferneyhough. Besides all that, he would by now be preparing his third, fiftieth-anniversary recording of the *Goldberg Variations*.

That is one possibility. Perhaps more likely is that he would have abandoned the piano for the orchestra. Two months before his death he conducted Wagner's *Siegfried Idyll* in the studio, and Bazzana lists many other works he was considering recording, including pieces by such cherished composers as Schoenberg, Strauss, Haydn, Sibelius, Wagner, Brahms and, of course, Bach. He would have had to work fast, because apparently he was planning to make, as his farewell to conducting, a film of Bach's B-Minor Mass in the composer's tercentenary year of 1985.

After that, or alternatively, he might have

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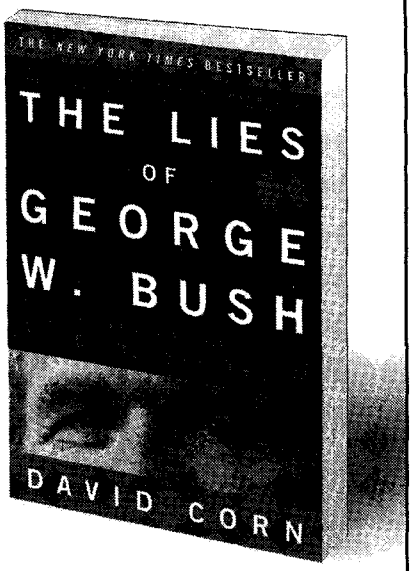

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flourished as a film director, developing the work he had begun in his radio documentaries of the late 1960s and early '70s, when he had, characteristically, exploited the technology to produce counterpoints of several speaking voices. Or he might finally have emerged as an original composer. As Bazzana points out, one of the things that drew Gould to Bach was that you could take the music apart and put it back together pretty much as you liked, in terms of speed, articulation and dynamic level, and he applied that approach to other music—not least to Mozart in his celebrated/notorious sonata recordings. This was not so much interpretation as reconstitution, the work of a co-creator, and in his youth Gould evidently thought of himself as a composer, perhaps first and foremost. He completed a string quartet in 1955 and sketched other works, the most tantalizing of which is *A Letter From Stalingrad*, setting a German officer's expression of stoicism in the absence of hope. Maybe, having come to the end of the road as a pianist, he would have had the time and the need to explore musical worlds that were his alone. This might have been advance from a further level of retreat, from the recording business as well as from the concert world, for maybe, as Bazzana imagines, he would have become a master of the Internet, and we could all be regularly visiting www.gould.com to download kits for putting together Bach fugues from keyboard lines in alternative colors, speeds and phrasings, or montages of wind and snow scenes and Sibelius, or comic dialogues (all voices by Gould), or the unimaginable inventions of an artist in the ecstasy of total solitariness. ■

Diversity and Its Discontents

DANIEL LAZARE

WHO ARE WE? The Challenges to America's National Identity.
By Samuel P. Huntington. Simon & Schuster. 428 pp. $27.

For most of his half-century-long career, Samuel Huntington, professor of government at Harvard, has made a point of telling the US ruling elite what it has most wanted to hear. During the Age of Eisenhower, he extolled "the military values [of] loyalty, duty, restraint, dedication" and argued that the United States had more to learn from "the disciplined order of West Point...than the garish individualism of Main Street." In the 1960s he assured America that time was on its side in Vietnam because "forced-draft urbanization and modernization"—i.e., the free use of napalm and defoliants—was emptying the countryside and depriving the Vietcong of its rural base of support. He called for a stronger presidency and a more disciplined Congress after Watergate and added for good measure that granting equal rights to African-Americans might be more than the American political system could bear. "There are...potentially desirable limits to the indefinite extension of political democracy" was how he put it in a 1975 report sponsored by the Trilateral Commission. During the early years of the Reagan Administration he warned that the United States faced "a major survivability gap" and urged the deployment of the MX and a Star Wars antimissile defense system to counter what he said was a growing Soviet threat.

Despite such unpleasant tidings, however, he remained essentially optimistic about America's long-term prospects. Xenophobia was on the rise, but Huntington continued to stick with the longstanding liberal line that immigration and diversity were positive and that there was no ethnic group that an open and dynamic America could not absorb. Rather than an ethnic state, he wrote in 1981, the United States was an ideological state based on an "American Creed" of liberty and justice for all. Where ordinarily one might expect such a belief system to weaken over time, the opposite was more likely. "The more culturally pluralistic the nation becomes," he declared, "the more essential the political values of the Creed become in defining what it is that Americans have in common." Diversity, in other words, was a source of strength. The more America's population mirrored that of the world at large, the more ideologically united it would become.

This was also what the ruling elite wanted to hear. Yet a dozen years later, just as the United States was celebrating its final victory over the Soviet Union, Huntington's thinking took an unexpected turn. Despite America's unparalleled triumph, he argued in "The Clash of Civilizations?," an article in *Foreign Affairs* that he later expanded into a bestselling book of the same title (minus the question mark), it would not get its long-awaited opportunity to remake the world in its image. On the contrary, the United States would find itself embroiled in a series of global conflicts pitting a secular West against an Islamic Middle East, a Hindu South Asia, an Orthodox Russia and so on. The epic contest between capitalism and socialism, in Huntington's view, thus turned out to have been an epiphenomenon masking the real struggle among the followers of Jesus, Mohammed, Vishnu et al. Now that the cold war was out of the way, the struggle of some seven, eight or nine regional civilizations (Huntington was vague as to the exact number) was once again coming to the fore. Instead of advancing into the twenty-first century, the world, as he saw it, was returning to the eleventh.

This was grim, but, as things have turned out, not entirely inaccurate. The world is more fractious since the demise of the cold war system, and post-9/11 a growing portion of the conflict is transpiring along "civilizational" lines. Osama bin Laden has declared war on Crusaders and Jews, while the President, according to an unnamed family member quoted in Peter and Rochelle Schweizer's new book, *The Bushes: Portrait of a Dynasty*, believes that "we the Christians" must "strike back with more force and more ferocity than they will ever know." One might argue that Huntington's argument is more than a bit self-serving, since Muslim fundamentalists, Christian Zionists and others sympathetic to his point of view are acting in concert, more or less, to see to it that his prophecy comes true. Still, there's no question that his influence has been growing.

Now Huntington is back with a vision that is even bleaker. In *Who Are We? The Challenges to America's National Identity*, he narrows his focus from the civilization to the state. His former confidence concerning America's ability to carry on as a purely ideological entity has vanished; he now believes that it can survive only as an "Anglo-Protestant" state dedicated to the matrix of religious, cultural and political beliefs that the original settlers brought over from England in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries. He is not arguing that everyone who is less than 100 percent WASP should pick up and leave. But he contends that if Americans

Daniel Lazare, a regular contributor to Books & the Arts, is the author, most recently, of The Velvet Coup: The Constitution, the Supreme Court, and the Decline of American Democracy *(Verso). He is currently at work on a book about the politics of Christianity, Judaism and Islam.*

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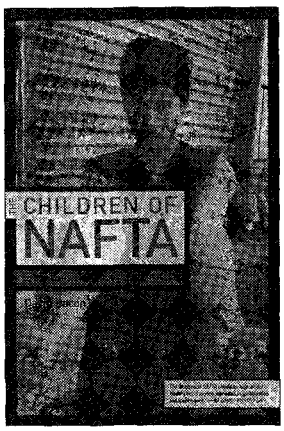

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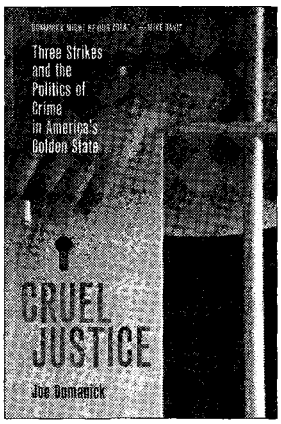

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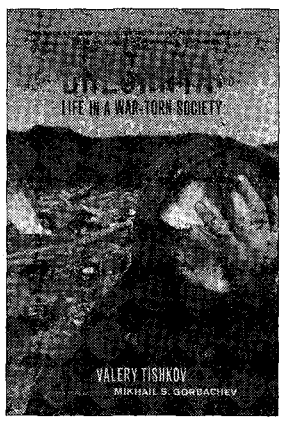

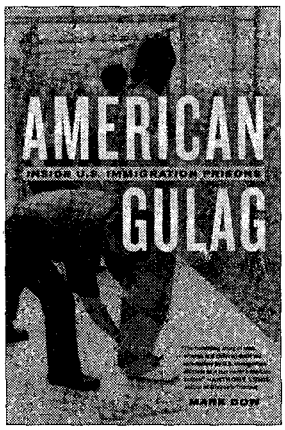

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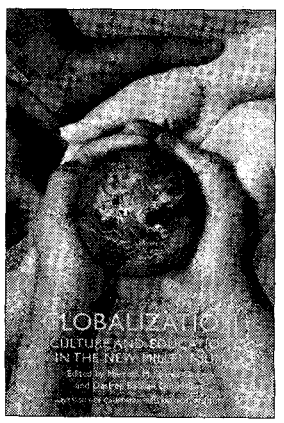

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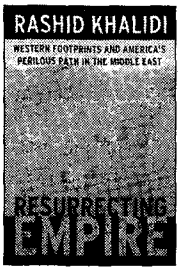

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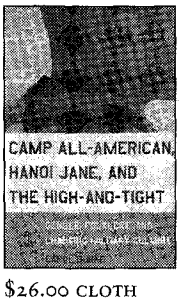

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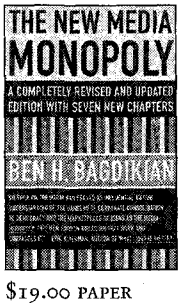

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want their country to hold together in the coming decades, they must rededicate themselves not only to a set of founding political beliefs but to a founding culture.

What is that culture? Rather than just life, liberty and the pursuit of happiness, Huntington says, it includes such key elements as "the English language; Christianity; religious commitment; English concepts of the rule of law, the responsibility of rulers, and the rights of individuals; and dissenting Protestant values of individualism, the work ethic, and the belief that humans have the ability and the duty to try to create a heaven on earth, a 'city on a hill.'" Readers familiar with Huntington's massive 1968 tome, *Political Order in Changing Societies*, will recognize these as the essential features of the "Tudor polity," which the Puritans supposedly took with them when they set sail for Massachusetts in 1630. Although the Tudor dynasty had ended some twenty-seven years earlier with the death of Elizabeth I, the theory (which Huntington picked up from the constitutional historian Charles McIlwain) holds that the Puritan middle class responded to the absolutist, crypto-Catholic policies of her successors, the Stuarts, by holding ever more tightly to the ideas they associated with her reign: patriotism, antipapism, limited government and the belief that the English were God's new chosen people. Their purpose in journeying to the New World was to safeguard this heritage and construct a new political order (or, rather, reconstruct an old one) along neo-Elizabethan lines. Anxious nearly four centuries later that assorted multiculturalists, affirmative action advocates and Clinton Democrats are tearing America apart, Huntington makes a passionate plea for a return to the original Tudor "constitution" underlying the formal Constitution now encased in a bomb-proof vault in the National Archives.

While America may change in some respects, he argues, it must never abandon those sixteenth-century Anglo-Protestant beliefs that have been the source of its greatness. Rather, it must return to its roots by restricting immigration, protecting the English language and turning its back on liberal secularism. Although Huntington is cagey as to whether he thinks it *should* happen or is merely predicting that it *will*, he contends that a white, male, nativist backlash would be a "possible and plausible response" to the affirmative-action policies and "minority language and cultural maintenance programs" that "nonelected governmental elites" have imposed on the United States in violation of the "American Creed." After all, "if blacks and Hispanics organize and lobby for special government-sponsored privileges, why not whites? If the National Association for the Advancement of Colored People and La Raza are legitimate organizations, why not a national organization to promote white interests?"

All of which is enough to establish Huntington as America's answer to Jean-Marie Le Pen, or perhaps the thinking man's Pat Buchanan. But while it would be nice to report that *Who Are We?* is crude and lowbrow and therefore easily dismissed, the unfortunate fact is that it is Huntington's best book in decades. Compared with the tangled mess that was *The Clash of Civilizations*—which in true tautological fashion assembled a mass of evidence in support of its thesis and then announced that its thesis was proven because the evidence was so massive—his new work is far more rigorous and logical. He puts his finger on the key problems besetting the modern nation-state, analyzes them with admirable clarity and then uses such analysis to reach conclusions that are the

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diametric opposite of what they should be. The results are seductive and powerful and all the more dangerous as a consequence. This is a very bad book precisely because it is so very good.

On at least one level, the key problem besetting the modern nation-state has to do with the old question of change and continuity. Specifically, how can the United States claim to be the same nation it was in the eighteenth century when so much about it is different? A liberal might respond that what unites modern-day Americans with their eighteenth-century "forebears" is a common set of beliefs that have defined their country from the outset. Yet this avoids the question of the degree to which those core values have changed. In fact, a major portion of the US population believes in things such as racial and sexual equality and gay rights, which we can safely say would have left the embattled farmers at Lexington and Concord aghast. How can we claim to be members of the same great American family given such an enormous gulf? And if we don't make such a claim, why not cut our ties with the past and float freely away?

Needless to say, Huntington either does not believe in such a right or thinks that Americans exercise it only at their peril. Cutting America's cultural ties to the past, he writes, implies a concept of nationhood consisting of little more than "a political contract among individuals lacking any other commonality." Where he once thought this was enough, he now declares that "America with only the Creed as a basis for unity could soon evolve into a loose confederation of ethnic, racial, cultural, and political groups, with little or nothing in common apart from their location in the territory of what had been the United States of America." The United States would come to resemble the old polyglot Austro-Hungarian, Ottoman or Russian empires, except that where they at least had emperors to hold them together, America would lack even that. Instead, it would disintegrate as each subgroup went off to contemplate its own navel, leaving no one to worry about the nation as a whole.

This is a caricature, obviously, of a movement that represents fragmentation in some hands but something quite different in others. Huntington, however, targets not just multiculturalism but immigration, both the form it has taken in recent years and the way it has been presented. Contrary to myth, he argues, America is not a nation of immigrants but, initially at least, was a nation of settlers who, in going off to the New World, saw themselves not as moving to a new nation but rather as relocating from one British jurisdiction to another. Like American settlers in the Old West, they sought not to build a new nation but to extend the domain of an old one. In so doing, they gave the country a distinctly British cast to which subsequent immigrants, those who arrived after independence, have had no choice but to adapt. Thus, the children of Jewish immigrants have donned tweed jackets and entered the Ivy League, while at least one offspring of Italian immigrants has taken a seat on the Supreme Court so as to better expound the "timeless" principles of Anglo-Norman law. Regardless of religion or nationality, all have subjected themselves to an Anglo-Protestant makeover to one degree or another, Germans, Irish, Chinese, Mex...

Actually, says Huntington, Mexicans are the exception. Not only have they been slower to assimilate than other immigrant groups, but the fact that the United States shares a 2,000-mile border with their original homeland, he argues, has given their influx the quality of an invasion, which previous waves have

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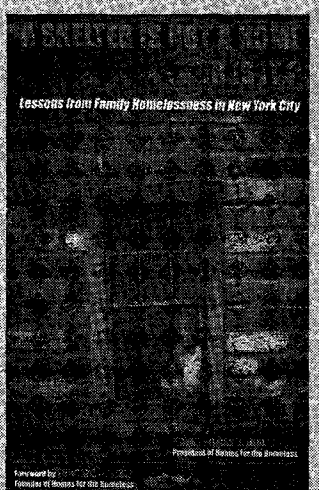

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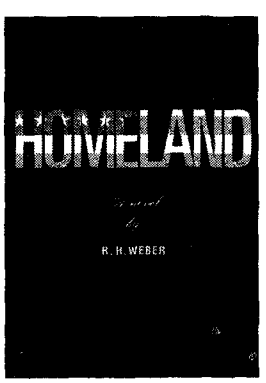

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not had. Huntington is not one to beat around the bush. "Mexican immigration," he declares, "is leading toward the demographic *reconquista* of areas Americans took from Mexico by force in the 1830s and 1840s." (Actually, many of us would be happy to give back Texas, although we doubt the Mexicans would take it.) The new arrivals are "blurring the border between Mexico and America, introducing a very different culture, while also promoting the emergence, in some areas, of a blended society and culture, half-American and half-Mexican." Huntington marshals evidence showing that because their original home is just next door, Mexican immigrants have been slower to adopt US citizenship than other ethnic groups (although Canadians have not been much quicker, for presumably the same reason) and also slower to learn English. Mexican-Americans are hardly the first immigrant group to be pulled this way and that by loyalty to both the United States and their original homeland. But because the latter in their case is exceptionally close at hand, the pull it exerts, according to Huntington, is exceptional as well.

Nowhere does Huntington address the question of what is to be done. He doesn't have to. Merely to "problematize" Mexican immigration in this fashion is enough. The more Americans buy into his argument that Mexicans are a threat—an argument that will be increasingly attractive the more the economy turns downward—the more a host of "solutions" will present themselves more or less automatically: stepped-up border patrols, intensified efforts to bar those whose papers are not in order from public schools and hospital emergency rooms, etc. Considering the immense economic benefits of moving to America—Huntington quotes the historian David Kennedy to the effect that the US-Mexican income gap "is the largest between any two contiguous countries in the world"—all such measures will prove ineffectual to one degree or another. But, as with the drug war, each failure will lead to an even more extreme response. Ultimately, the result is likely to be a Fortress America complete with a militarized border zone, police checkpoints and "English-only" signs in bus stations and other such gathering spots, an outcome that Huntington is not likely to find displeasing. Of course, it is not only Mexican-Americans who will suffer in such circumstances, but Irish-Americans, Jews, leftists and anyone else suspected of dual loyalty.

Huntington is equally adamant on the subject of religion. Americans are exceptionally religious by First World standards, and he thinks they should remain that way because...well, because Americans are exceptionally religious. He also points out that the United States is anything but religiously diverse by world standards. With as many as 88 percent of Americans declaring themselves Christian, the United States is more Christian than Israel is Jewish, Egypt is Muslim or India is Hindu. In a global survey of religious attitudes conducted in the early 1990s, he notes that America emerged as the fifth-most-religious nation in the world, behind Nigeria, Poland, India and Turkey but ahead of some thirty-seven others ranging from Ireland and Brazil to South Korea, China and Japan. Ninety-two percent of Americans believe in God, according to other polls, 85 percent believe that the Bible is God's word and 74 percent believe in life after death. As the sponsor of another religious survey observed in 2000: "Americans strongly equate religion with personal ethics and behavior, considering it an antidote to the moral decline they perceive in our nation today. Crime, greed, uncaring parents, materialism—Americans believe

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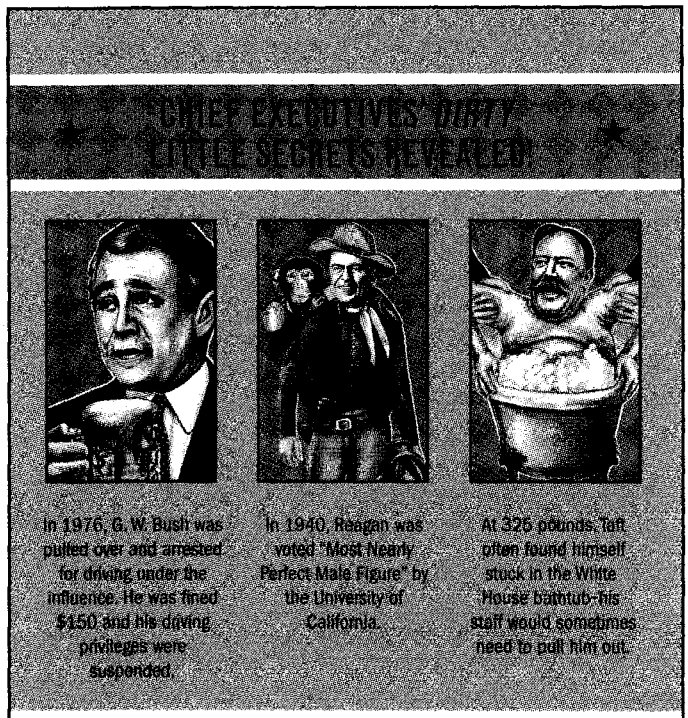
that all these problems would be mitigated if people were more religious." Amid the unprecedented stresses of the post-9/11 period, an astonishing 59 percent of Americans said they believed that the apocalyptic prophecies contained in the Book of Revelation would come true.

Nowhere, needless to say, does Huntington indicate that he himself believes in the Book of Revelation—he is far too sophisticated for that. Rather, he approves of religion not because it is true but because it is essential to the Tudor constitution and because it is intrinsic to America's evolution from "promised land" to "crusader state." While it doesn't quite come out and say so, *Who Are We?* comes remarkably close to thanking Al Qaeda for the events of 2001. Because "identity requires differentiation," Huntington writes, the fall of the Soviet Union in 1989–91 left the United States adrift. It needed a new enemy to define itself, and small-timers like Slobodan Milosevic simply would not do the trick. But then, says Huntington, "on September 11, 2001, Osama bin Laden ended America's search." In addition to "kill[ing] several thousand people, he...filled the vacuum created by Gorbachev with an unmistakably dangerous new enemy, and he pinpointed America's identity as a Christian nation." Where the struggle against the Soviets encouraged America to define itself ideologically, the new struggle, according to Huntington, encourages it to define itself religiously. Indeed, Bush's crusade and bin Laden's jihad have, in an odd way, turned out to be mutually reinforcing. The more they wage war against each other, the more they succeed in "fundamentalizing" both the United States and the Middle East. The more America battles militant Islam, the more it makes itself into its Christian equivalent.

Now that much of the world has adopted the logic of *The Clash of Civilizations*, the question is whether Americans will go the extra mile and adopt the logic of *Who Are We?* My guess is that a growing number will. The problem is not just a declining economy that leaves Americans short-tempered but a growing sense of belligerence that the war on terrorism serves to promote. Huntington is right: It imposes a different sort of logic. In previous conflicts Americans took aim at targets that were specific and down-to-earth—the Southern slavocracy, for instance, imperial Germany or the Nazi government in Berlin. As soon as they fell, the war was over. But this time, the goal—to "rid the world of evil," as Bush put it a few days after 9/11— is nebulous in the extreme. Since evil will always be with us in one form or another, a crusade aimed at banishing it forever is a formula not only for endless warfare but for ever-expanding bitterness against anyone who is not completely on board. It is a self-feeding, self-perpetuating system designed to isolate the United States and cause it to turn inward. The more it does, the more preoccupied it will become with searching out that kernel of America that it regards as its true essence. The more it tries to isolate that core, the more intolerant it will grow of anyone or anything that it regards as adulterated or impure.

The process is by no means inevitable. Americans could put a stop to it either by admitting defeat or by rethinking the war on terrorism from top to bottom in order to come up with something more rational, democratic and effective. But the first is something that Americans never, ever do, while no one in Washington seems morally or intellectually capable of the second. Since no one is willing to challenge the (il)logic of an endless crusade against terrorism, it can only drag America deeper and deeper into the abyss.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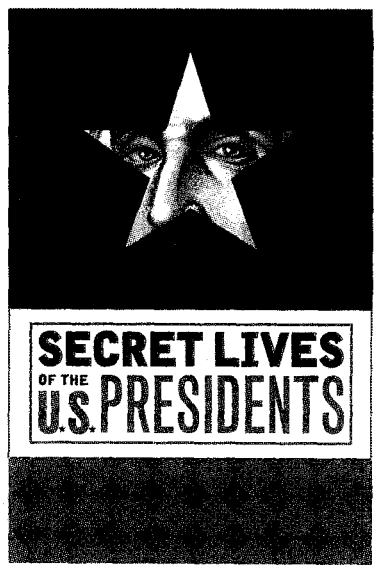

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Interestingly, there is little in Huntington's book about democracy. The reason is obvious. Government of, by and for the people implies the sovereignty of "we the living" not only over government and society but over tradition as well, whereas *Who Are We?* implies something very different. It represents a return to the ideas of Edmund Burke, a longstanding hero of Huntington's, who argued that "a perfect democracy is...the most shameless thing in the world" and that a nation must be seen as a mystical union "between those who are living, those who are dead, and those who are to be born." The effect of such thinking is to reduce "we the living" to little more than "temporary possessors and life-renters," as Burke put it, and to substitute tradition for popular sovereignty. Instead of the present triumphing over the past, it means the past triumphing over the present. Samuel Huntington's new work is a reactionary manifesto that may very well be on a par with Burke's conservative classic *Reflections on the Revolution in France*. Considering America's mood these days, it should have no trouble finding an audience. ■

Where the Wild Things Are

MARIA MARGARONIS

LITTLE BLACK BOOK OF STORIES. By A.S. Byatt. Knopf. 240 pp. $21.

There's a temptation to begin with death. The dark title of A.S. Byatt's *Little Black Book of Stories* suggests it; the phrase is also a riposte to D.H. Lawrence's description of the novel as "the one bright book of life," which was a tormenting orthodoxy of her youth. All five stories here are intimate with the uncanny, animating it in eerie, fleshly forms.

But this black book, like most of Byatt's work, is also full of colors, almost obsessively named: blues and golds, russets and purples, "shades of ink and elephant." The northern sky is "opal and gun-metal, grass-green and crimson, mussel-blue and velvet black," or "trout-dappled, mackerel-shot, turquoise, sapphire, peridot, hot transparent red." Exact, vivid descriptions bring the page to life: "They sniffed the air, which was full of a warm mushroom smell, and a damp moss smell, and a sap smell, and a distant hint of dead ashes." There is no sentiment and little mourning. Death is not so much a human event as a copula—boatman and border guard between animate and inanimate, flesh and memory, life and art.

The stories gravitate toward that boundary, blurring it or reasserting its force, in a prose that remains precise and cool. As Freud pointed out, it's the blending of the familiar with the inexplicable that sends shivers down our spines; Byatt's tales of the supernatural depend on an almost hallucinatory precision for their haunting effects. "The Thing in the Forest," the first story, begins like a fairy tale, but for a crucial, small insertion of doubt—"There were once two little girls who saw, or believed they saw, a thing in a forest"—and goes on to sketch a generic group of children being evacuated from an English city during World War II: "They all had bare legs and scuffed shoes and wrinkled socks. Most had wounds on their knees in varying stages of freshness and scabbiness." The long description contains only one simile, which refers us both to the war and to the shadowy forests of the Brothers Grimm: "They were like a disorderly dwarf regiment, stomping along the platform."

The girls, Penny and Primrose, one dark, one fair, are at once fairy-tale sisters and real English children. No one has told them where they're going, or why; their sense of foreboding is transmitted by the heartbeat of the prose and by the spare and knowing use of metaphor: "the bus bumped along snaking country lanes, under whipping branches, dark leaves on dark wooden arms on a dark sky." The forest, when they enter it, is a recognizable English wood, vivid and slightly sinister to their urban senses. They hear "the chatter and repeated lilt and alarm of invisible birds, high up, further in." They admire "the stiff upright fruiting rods of the Lords and Ladies, packed with fat red berries." Out of these exact observations Byatt conjures up a vile, impossible Thing, which arrives first as a sound and smell and then as a visible worm:

> The rest of its very large body appeared to be glued together, like still-wet papier-mâché, or the carapace of stones and straws and twigs worn by caddis-flies underwater. It had a tubular shape, as a turd has a tubular shape, a provisional amalgam. It was made of rank meat, and decaying vegetation, but it also trailed veils and prostheses of manmade materials, bits of wire-netting, foul dish-cloths, wire-wool full of pan scrubbings, rusty nuts and bolts...

The Thing is the Loathly Worm of medieval ballads and a version of the postmodern artworks Byatt likes to invent, but it is also, because it is so concretely imagined, incontrovertibly material, present, real. It moves forward relentlessly like time, like stories—and passes the two girls by.

After this the story weakens slightly, as if exhausted by the birth of its prodigy; its mystery is almost hijacked by ideas. Much later, middle-aged and unmarried, Penny and Primrose meet by chance in the same house where they had stayed as children and go back, separately, into the wood. (Here there is an uncharacteristic lapse in continuity: The season changes, overnight, from autumn into spring.) Primrose works as a children's storyteller and lives in a haze of impressions and fantasies. (Byatt's disdain for her shows through a little, cracking the narrative spell.) She follows a squirrel to a mossy tuffet in "the centre" of the wood; although she knows the worm was real she doesn't see it again. It is Penny, a child psychologist concerned with difficult truths, who stumbles on bones and fragments from the monster's meals. She goes in search of it, the horror at the heart of the world, which, in a different kind of tale, might have been called her fate: "It had trampled on her life, had sucked out her marrow, without noticing who or what she was. She would go and face it. What else was there, she asked herself, and answered herself, nothing."

The moral is that the forces shaping our lives are often inaccessible; their apprehension takes effort and accuracy, even a desperate courage, which fairy tales like Primrose's deflect. But of course "The Thing in the Forest," so concrete and convincing, is itself a fairy tale. Like a Möbius strip or a mythological snake, it bites its tail and ends with the sentence that began it, spoken this time by Primrose to children sitting in a circle of little plastic chairs. The story, like the impossible worm-made-out-of-words, itself embodies a paradox, which has to do with fiction and reality.

Byatt wasn't always a writer of tales. Best known in America for *Possession*, her 1990 literary romance, she has published eight novels and six story collections as well as several books of

Maria Margaronis writes from The Nation's *London bureau.*

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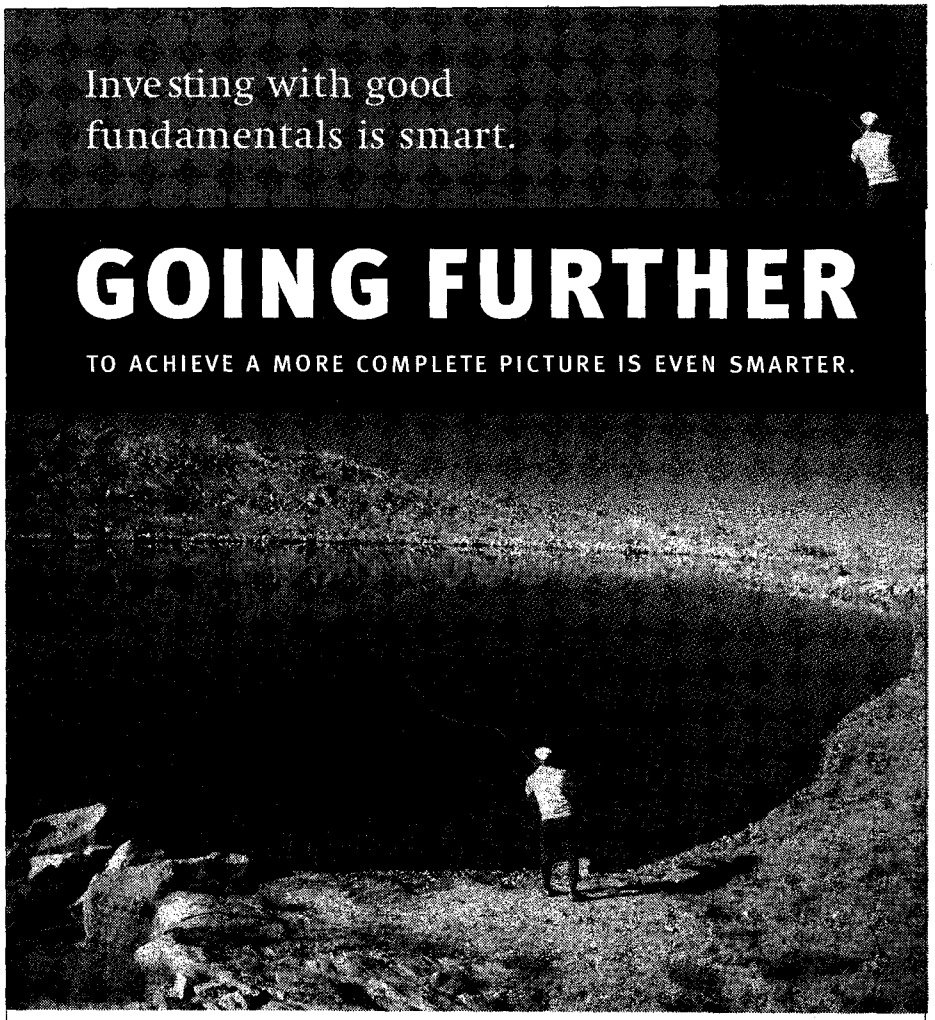
criticism. In Britain she is a literary grande dame, though there is something equivocal about her reputation. *Possession* was a universal success; her other novels have been well reviewed, but sometimes with a polite reticence, as if they were not wholly loved. The complaint most often leveled at them is that they're too intellectually driven, weighed down with references, mired in a forgotten world where readers were assumed to know their Wordsworth and what it is that happens at the end of *A Winter's Tale*. They're certainly bookish books: Byatt is above all a passionate reader, fundamentally concerned with what it means to live in words. But they're also hungry for experience, energized by the conviction that, with a Herculean effort, the world can be made accessible to language and to thought.

Byatt began in the English realist tradition of George Eliot and Iris Murdoch—a tradition morally committed to showing the world as it is, not in the documentary sense but by revealing "the real impenetrable human person" (Murdoch's phrase) against the background of all that eludes human understanding. In an early book-length study Byatt quotes Murdoch shaking her head, as it were, pre-emptively at Primrose: "We are...benighted creatures sunk in a reality whose nature we are constantly and overwhelmingly tempted to deform by fantasy." For the intellectual circles of Byatt's youth in 1950s Cambridge, under the stern sign of the critic F.R. Leavis, literature was supposed to seek out truth, to fill the space left empty by religion.

What was a young writer to do with this seductive, paralyzing challenge—especially a woman writer in love with language and ideas? ("Knowledge," she wrote much later, has "its own sensuous pleasure, its own fierce well-being, like good sex, like a day in bright sun on a hot empty beach.") Frederica Potter, the semi-autobiographical heroine of Byatt's tetralogy (*The Virgin in the Garden*, *Still Life*, *Babel Tower* and *A Whistling Woman*), doesn't become a novelist at all, although she thinks she should: "I don't have any ideas. I've been educated out of it. Even thinking of it brings on a kind of panic."

Written over a period of more than twenty years, the Frederica novels are the trace of Byatt's struggle with her angel. Taken together, they are a loose, shape-shifting thing, a search for forms that grows and branches with the characters' search for ways to live their lives. Part family saga, part *Bildungsroman*, part cultural history, part novels of ideas, they have at their center the problem of how we know



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and describe the world—which, for Frederica, is also the problem of how to live in both her body and her mind. In Byatt's best moments, feeling and intellect go hand in hand into uncharted forest, urging each other on. Here is Frederica, in *Babel Tower*, the obsessively verbal woman making love:

> You might think, she thinks, as their bodies join, that there are two beings striving to lose themselves in each other, to become one. The growing heat, the wetness, the rhythmic movements, the hot breath, the slippery skins, inside and out, are one, are part of one thing. But we both need to be separate, she thinks. I *lend myself* to this, the language in her head goes on, with its own rhythm, *I lose myself*, it remarks with gleeful breathlessness....

These lines, with their need to name and describe experience as a thinking woman, owe something to Doris Lessing, but Byatt doesn't have Lessing's strong political spin. *Babel Tower* and *A Whistling Woman* are full of sharp observations about the British 1960s (happenings, cults, the rise of television, the antipsychiatry movement), which Frederica (like Byatt) dislikes for celebrating mindless merging over clarity and precision. But the terms in which she frames them are moral and formal, not social or historical: order against chaos, truth against sincerity, science against religion. Sometimes the weight of ideas threatens to sink the project; characters turn papery, plot machinery lumbers into view. Sometimes the books risk being torn apart by the titanic, muffled struggle going on inside them: Byatt (like Frederica) constantly fights the skein of words in which she is both trammeled and at ease, trying to stub her toe on hard reality. She describes the physical world and works of art, naming colors, scrubbing out every trace of figurative language. (*Still Life*, the best of the series, began as an attempt to give up metaphor completely.) She brings in mathematics, Darwin, DNA, the life of ants and snails. And she turns the conventions of narrative form against itself—which brings us back to death.

Near the end of *Still Life* Frederica's sister, Stephanie, is fatally electrocuted by a fridge. Although her death is not entirely unprepared—Byatt can't resist laying a couple of literary clues—it is shocking nevertheless. We have lived in Stephanie's skin through first love, marriage and the birth of her two children; we know her, love her even. In the world of the novel she has come to stand for feeling, the pull of instinctive life. All our experience of fiction leads us to believe that she will live—or, if she dies, at least die meaningfully.

The accident has a terrible precedent in Byatt's own life: In 1972 her 11-year-old son was killed by a hit-and-run driver. (Her long account of Stephanie's husband's grief is painfully exact.) It also has a theological aspect: Stephanie is married to a clergyman, who is professionally bound to believe in God's care for his creation. Yet Byatt's own explanation of Stephanie's death, given in a lecture in 1999, is formal and literary: "I remember...being so angry with D.H. Lawrence for declaring in *Women in Love* that there were no accidents, that every man made his own fate, that I constructed a novel with at least six main characters so that I could imagine a real, unpredicted, random accident at the end of the second volume that my readers would experience as accident."

Something about this virtual murder seems to have set her free, as if she had achieved what she set out to do and had at last struck through to solid rock. Though she returned at length to Frederica and her knotty verbal self, her next book after *Still Life* was *Possession*, which juggles genre and pastiche, satire and fairy tale. The collections of stories and novellas that followed—*The Matisse Stories*, *Elementals: Stories of Fire and Ice*, *Angels and Insects*, *The Djinn in the Nightingale's Eye*—belong to the same stream, mixing the experience of ordinary people with the life of art and myth. In tales and fables, recalcitrant reality is not an elusive thing to be nosed out by searching sentences, but built into the structure: It is the characters' fate. Playing with stories is a way of playing with death—the thing that gives time its shape, the spoiler of plots and plans—as Scheherazade plays with the Sultan's long-deferred desire. "It should have been farce or fable, I see that now," says Gillian Perholt, the heroine of *The Djinn*, "and I was writing passion and tragedy and buttons done with verisimilitude.... I got all enmeshed in what was realism and what was reality and what was true...and my imagination failed."

In the story "Raw Material" from the *Little Black Book*, Byatt rewrites Stephanie's tragedy as farce, making sudden death the sting in the tail of a fable about realism. Jack Smollett, writing teacher, insists that his students avoid melodrama and write about what they know. His favorite is an elderly lady, author of detailed, Byatt-like accounts of housework in her youth, "reproduced" here in full. Her choice of words is flawless, her pleasure in them shameless; her writing glitters with "contingent quiddity." Her fellow students call her work pedantic, pompous, show-off, over-ornate,

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but to Smollett it's a revelation, inspiring his own stalled writing: "Miss Fox's brief essays made Jack want to write. They made him see the world as something to be written." The astonishing payoff, rendered in prose as vivid as Miss Fox's, utterly undermines his faith in his art and vindicates the students. As in "The Thing in the Forest," unforeseeable, unbearable reality has the last word—but it has it in a story.

If "Raw Material" does a *danse macabre* on realism's grave, "The Pink Ribbon" goes still further. Its central consciousness belongs to James, a retired classicist, caring for "Maddy Mad Mado," his wife transformed by Alzheimer's disease; the humiliations and resentments of their life together are drawn unflinchingly. To preserve his own brain cells he reads Virgil at night—*Aeneid* VI, the descent to the underworld. As so often in Byatt, the reading permeates his life, stirring up memories of the Second World War, when the line between the quick and the dead seemed thin and provisional:

> Friends you were meeting for dinner, who lived in your head as you set off to meet them, never came, because they were mangled meat under brick and timber. Other friends who stared in your memory as the dead stare whilst they take up the final shape your memory will give them, suddenly turned up on the doorstep in lumpen living flesh, bruised and dirty...and begged for a bed, for a cup of tea.

In Virgil's underworld, those who will be reborn drink from the river Lethe to forget their past. Mado, too, has become a child again, and more: After a visit from a strange young woman in a red silk dress James finds himself invaded by their early lovemaking, "tooth and claw, feather and velvet, blood and honey."

What is most unnerving in this moving story about memory and loss is the origin of Mado herself. For Iris Murdoch's steel-trap mind was also destroyed by Alzheimer's ("like moth-eaten knitting," says James, echoing Frederica's definition of the novel as "a long thread of language, like knitting, thicker and thinner in patches"). And Murdoch in her late decline was famously soothed, like Mado, by the Teletubbies. The story is at once an act of mourning and of matricide, a murderous tribute crafted out of Byatt's own worst fears and most demanding talent, her relentless honesty. Jack Smollett could not make art out of Miss Fox's end; Byatt has no such compunctions. Bereft of memory the human body is, in more senses than one, no more or less than raw material.

Or is it? "Body Art" also probes the tricky seam between what's human and what's merely organic, setting an obstetrician interested in abstract painting against a young woman artist interested in bodies. The doctor has lost his Catholic faith before an awkward carving of the crucifixion; the woman has lost her fertility because of a botched abortion. Hired to help catalogue a collection of medical relics, she uses them to make a sculpture of the goddess Kali, as always meticulously described: "Her four arms were medical prostheses, wooden or gleaming mechanical artefacts, ending in sharp steel and blunt wooden fingers.... Her earrings were preserved foetuses, decked with beads.... Her crochet hooks were the tools of the nineteenth-century obstetricians, midwives and abortionists." The sculpture comes to represent the battle between doctor and artist for control of the artist's body; the story ends, unexpectedly, with the adoration of a baby: "He was overcome with dreadful love and grief. She was a person. She had not been there and now she was there, and she was the person he loved." But "Body Art" is no

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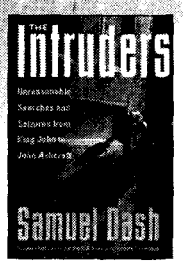

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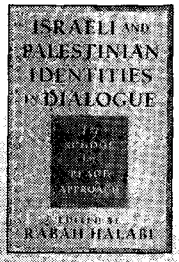

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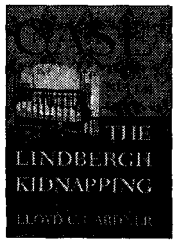

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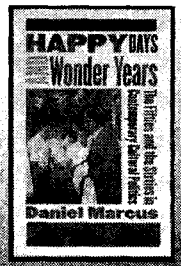

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antiabortion tract. As Kali brings together creation and destruction, the birth of the baby simply shows the other face of fate. Emerging from the story's tangles as the Thing emerged from its forest, it brings with it a sudden and disarming clarity, a different confrontation with reality's mystery.

The Frederica tetralogy also ends with a surprising pregnancy, which follows a performance of *A Winter's Tale* in which Stephanie's daughter seems momentarily to reincarnate her mother. But Byatt has only limited tolerance for symbolic babies or the idea of art as consolation: For her, art is a more unyielding and inhuman thing. The central story in the *Little Black Book* is a countermyth to the story of Pygmalion, whose perfect statue was brought to life by Venus, and to Hermione's transformation from stone to living woman at the end of Shakespeare's play. In Byatt's version a lexicographer undone by grief finds herself turning to stone, not smoothly and generically but in specific excrescences: "flakes of silica and nodes of basalt," "bubbles of sinter," "layers of hornblende," "dikes of dolerites." Being an etymologist she searches for herself in dictionaries and relishes the "lovely words: pyrolusite, ignimbrite, omphacite, uvarovite, glaucophane, schist, shale, gneiss, tuff." As she stiffens in her mineral carapace the prose becomes encrusted with polysyllabic nouns, embodying her in lapidary sentences.

In "A Stone Woman" all the borders are blurred: art and nature, organic and inorganic, living and dead. Rocks, thinks the lexicographer, are often formed from things that once were living; the names of stones are full of organic metaphors: "Carnelian is from carnal, from flesh." Her metamorphosis is, as usual, painstakingly imagined from within. A sculptor takes her to Iceland to record and decorate her; red threadworms burrow in her crevices; her slow thoughts "rumble" in her stony mind. Eventually she finds ecstatic liberation in the northern hills, running like one of Picasso's great stone women to meet the shadowy figures who live among the rocks. "Preserving solitude and distance, staying cold and frozen," Byatt once wrote, "may, for women as well as artists, be a way of preserving life."

To Lawrence's "one bright book of life," Byatt has opposed a set of crystalline stories, mined from deep structures in the human brain. In fables she has found a way to contain the paradox of realism—its necessary artifice—without giving up on reality: Her most extravagant visions depend on precise representations of a palpable world. She is an athlete of the imagination, breaking barriers without apparent effort; at a time when British writers tend to have their eyes on the Atlantic, she has placed herself in an old tradition that runs from ancient myth to Italo Calvino, from Iceland to Arabia. But still, I hope she will not turn her back on novels and their struggle with history. There's something in the messy latitude, the restless searching after truth, the vital imperfection of the Frederica books that feels especially necessary in these nightmarish, bedazzled days. ■

The African Predicament

DEBORAH SCROGGINS

A CONTINENT FOR THE TAKING: The Tragedy and Hope of Africa.
By Howard W. French. Knopf. 280 pp. $25.

Howard French has written a passionate, heartbreaking and ultimately heartbroken book about covering West Africa's blood-soaked descent into a nightmare of war and greed as a reporter for the *New York Times* in the 1990s. The book is called *A Continent for the Taking: The Tragedy and Hope of Africa*, and, much as French wished it otherwise, there is far more tragedy than hope in it.

It has become something of a tradition for the correspondents of America's major newspapers to write a *tour d'horizon* upon concluding a stint on the continent. After David Lamb's *The Africans* was published to commercial and critical success in 1983, we had Blaine Harden's *Africa: Dispatches From a Fragile Continent* in 1991; Alan Cowell's *Killing the Wizards: Wars of Power and Freedom From Zaire to South Africa* in 1992; Keith B. Richburg's *Out of America: A Black Man Confronts Africa* in 1997; and Bill Berkeley's *The Graves Are Not Yet Full: Race, Tribe and Power in the Heart of Africa* in 2001. Since Lamb's time, the books have grown progressively bleaker, and French's may be the bleakest of all. Although French abhors the war porn he believes dominates most coverage of Africa, the continent's rot has advanced to a point where it is almost impossible to look beyond it. It is a situation that angers and sickens French all the more because he has a deeper and more profound connection to the continent than most journalists.

French fell in love with Africa before he gave any thought to journalism. Growing up in the United States, he was reminded by his proud African-American parents of black achievements at every turn. His father, a doctor, moved the family to Ivory Coast so that he could run a regional health program. After graduating from college, French spent six years living in Abidjan, first as a translator and university lecturer and finally as a freelance reporter. He married an Ivorian, learned several African languages and read widely and deeply about African culture and history.

He writes that he accepted the *Times*'s West Africa bureau in 1994 "as a personal challenge." He would not become a "fireman" chasing one disaster after another to satisfy what he regarded as "the world media's insatiable market in images of horror." He would not make heroes out of Westerners rushing to the rescue. He would show his readers Africa's strengths as well as its weaknesses.

It was not to be. The blaze already licking at West Africa when French returned burst into an inferno, forcing French to play the fireman after all and eventually burning him so badly that he felt lucky to escape. Sent to Mobutu's Zaire in 1995 to cover the outbreak of the ebola virus, he was wary of "rushing toward another lurid African mess that, thanks to the magic of television, had become the global story of the week." Within a year, he would find himself covering the collapse of Zaire itself and the death of millions sucked into its conflicts. As he struggled to make sense of what was happening—and especially the disastrous consequences of the Clinton Administration's decision to hand a wide swath of the continent over to a brand-new set of dictators (often euphemistically described as "strongmen"), starting with Rwanda's Paul Kagame—Africa fell further and further outside the orbit of world attention.

Following US foreign policy is part of

Deborah Scroggins, a former editor and correspondent for the Atlanta Journal and Constitution, *is the author of* Emma's War: An Aid Worker, Radical Islam and the Politics of Oil—A True Story of Love and Death in the Sudan *(Anchor), which won a 2003 Ron Ridenhour Award for Truth-Telling. She lives in Atlanta.*

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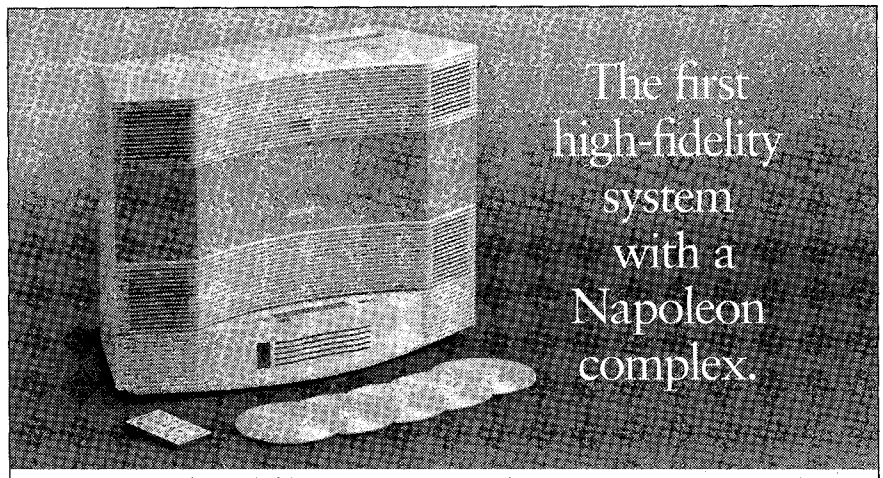
a *Times* correspondent's job, and French's book gives an unusually depressing account of American hypocrisy and mendacity toward Africa. The Clinton Administration wished Africa well. But it was not willing to risk American lives, treasure or votes even to halt the most gargantuan African tragedies, much less to foster African democracy, human rights or economic development. The "African Renaissance" the President was eager to trumpet turned out in large part to amount to opening the doors for American corporations eager to extract the continent's resources. Struggling democracies such as Mali's received little or no help (though when one considers the fate of such countries as Nigeria and Angola, which attracted more solicitous notice, perhaps indifference is a blessing in disguise). After the killing of eighteen US Rangers in Somalia, the Administration declined in 1994 to intervene when Rwandan Hutus began slaughtering their Tutsi compatriots by the hundreds of thousands, or even to call what was happening a genocide. "If we use the word 'genocide' and are seen as doing nothing, what will be the effect on the November [Congressional] election?" French quotes Susan Rice, a rising young black star who would soon be named Assistant Secretary of State for African Affairs, as saying in April of that year.

Paul Kagame's Tutsi-led Rwandan Patriotic Front finally relieved the Administration of this embarrassment by invading Rwanda and seizing power there. The Clintonites rewarded him with a shower of patronage. In a further attempt to evade responsibility, they allowed Rwanda's new Tutsi leaders and their Ugandan allies to carve up Zaire, now known again as Congo, while pursuing their vendetta against Hutu refugees hiding in that country. And the Administration turned a blind eye toward the Western businessmen who formed a series of unholy alliances with Rwandan, Ugandan and other warlords feasting on Zaire's carcass to maintain control over West Africa's oil, diamond, cobalt and other natural resources. The result has been the Congo wars, known in Africa as "Africa's World War." As French writes about the onset of the wars:

> Since independence, instability and bad governance had been Africa's twin Achilles' heels. They were the two internal weaknesses most immediately responsible for the continent's persistent misery, and the fighting that had just begun under Washington's generous political cover would spew both of these plagues across Central Africa, sowing political unrest, armed conflict and hu-



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manitarian disasters for at least the next decade.

If one moment symbolizes the US-African relationship chronicled in this book, it's when Clinton's UN envoy Bill Richardson visited Zaire in 1997. In the midst of his efforts to engineer the departure of longtime US ally Mobutu Sese Seko in favor of America's new, Rwandan-backed favorite, Laurent Kabila, Richardson invited French to accompany him on a side trip to rebel-held Kisangani. Richardson's intention was to demonstrate Washington's concern for the Hutu refugees Kabila's forces had been massacring. "There was an absurd proposition behind the stopover: a photo-op amid a holocaust," French writes. Kisangani was the "innermost river station" of the Belgian Congo, the last place from which boats leave up the Congo River, a brooding place of innumerable horrors. On the day he and Richardson arrived, a fresh surge of Hutu refugees confirmed that in the forest only thirty miles away, Kabila's men were engaged in massacring Hutus, including women and children. Aides quickly ushered Richardson toward a distraught mother carrying an infant.

Like any American politician, the envoy reached for the baby as he spoke a few sympathetic words to the mother. "Richardson's face bore the most basic expression of human sympathy and recognition of life's fragility, and his pity appeared entirely genuine," French writes. But this was Africa, not America. The moment Richardson reached for the baby, it died.

Needless to say, the baby's death didn't make the US evening news. And despite Richardson's assurances, Washington has made sure the revenge massacres of the Hutus and all the others who have died in the Congo wars have never really registered on the American consciousness, although at an estimated 3 to 4 million, the number of dead is truly astounding—far greater than the 800,000 memorialized during the recent ceremonies marking Rwanda's genocide or indeed in any other conflict since World War II.

Seeking to account for the West's indifference to Congo's nightmare, French does not spare the media. He blames himself for failing to do the "rudimentary ethnic detective work" that would have allowed him to spot Zaire's "Banyamulenge uprising" for the Rwandan-inspired Tutsi coup that it was. And he feels that in chasing the tale of Mobutu's fall, he and other reporters lost sight of the human carnage taking place inside Zaire's rainforest. But he reserves his most serious criticism for the *New Yorker* writer Philip Gourevitch, whose reporting on the Rwandan genocide—later published as a book, *We Wish to Inform You That Tomorrow We Will Be Killed With Our Families*, which won a National Book Critics Circle Award for nonfiction—made a deep impression on President Clinton. In French's view, Gourevitch mistakenly applied the template of the Holocaust to Rwanda's genocide, comparing the Tutsis to the European Jews and Kagame's regime to Israel. As the Congo wars got under way, Gourevitch's pieces became enormously influential in Washington. "Emotionally overpowering but deeply flawed analogies with Israel and with European Jewry and the Holocaust," he writes, "began to drive Washington's policies in Central Africa."

French believes that in portraying the Tutsis as unalloyed victims, Gourevitch turned a wrenching history of intercommunal struggle into a facile morality tale—with serious implications for the American policy-makers who accepted it. "The Tutsi, unlike Europe's Jews," he writes, "were a small minority that had enjoyed feudal tyrannies in Rwanda and neighboring Burundi for centuries. In Burundi they perpetrated genocide against the Hutu three times in a generation, and in both countries they were committed to winning or retaining power by force of arms." French says that Gourevitch, whose girlfriend's brother was Clinton spokesman James Rubin, not only played an important role in selling Laurent Kabila to Washington but downplayed the Rwandan-backed slaughter of the Hutu refugees in Congo. French is not alone in his disagreement with Gourevitch. Indeed, it could be argued that Gourevitch's readiness to view the Hutu-Tutsi conflict through the prism of the Holocaust is but another version of the intellectual laziness French notes among so many Western reporters and others, who insist on defining Africa and its problems in Western terms rather than making the effort to learn enough about Africa to begin to understand it on its own ethnic and political terms. But I would add another reason for America's lack of interest in the Congo dead: In Congo, unlike in Rwanda, the murder, rape and mayhem continues to this day. With the need to act still apparent enough to tickle our collective conscience, we do not care to look too closely.

And, human nature being what it is, very few outsiders are ever going to care enough to put Africa's interests ahead of their own. Given this, one wishes that French had shared more of his thoughts about what Africans themselves can do to improve matters, regardless of what the West does. How can Africa rectify the weakness that has bedeviled its relations with the rest of the world ever since the days of the slave trade?

Early in the book, French retells the story of Affonso, the King of the Kongo, who wrote to the king of Portugal in 1526 to deplore "the monstrous greed" that led his fellow Africans to sell even members of their own families in exchange for Western goods. The king of Portugal's reply was "brutal in its simplicity," French writes. "Kongo," he said, "had nothing else to sell."

Brutal though it is, the king's reply still stands. The vast majority of Africans still lack the means to buy or make the goods they need and want, including such basics as rudimentary medicine, clean water and elementary schooling. Far too often, Africa's ruling classes are willing to kill or essentially enslave their fellow citizens or consign them to lives of misery in exchange for a shot at a few foreign luxuries. (We are quick to condemn such "vampire elites" even as we take entirely for granted the Western, middle-class lifestyle to which they aspire and see no other means of gaining.) Colonialism was sold to European and American publics as a humanitarian effort to deal with the wars, slave-raiding and economic exploitation that resulted in the late nineteenth century from this historic imbalance in Africa's terms of trade, internal and external. When that project failed to solve the underlying problem, the West erected African nation-states in its own image. Now these states are falling to pieces. The spectacular failure of both models has left us right back where King Affonso started: "Corruption and depravity are so widespread that our land is entirely depopulated."

But perhaps it is churlish to ask French to answer such questions when he has already told us so much in this book. By the time he fell ill with malaria in 1997, French, like so many others, was burned out. "I began to conclude that Africa was starting to kill me," he writes. "So many loves had kept me going here: the beauty and the unfussy grace of the people, the amazing food—yes, the food—music rich beyond comparison, the sheer immediacy of human contact, the pleasure of living by my wits. But the grim truth was that a single mosquito bite had contained enough deadly force to lay me very low indeed." One can only hope that after a period away, he regains his strength and returns for another round with Africa, in all her loves and her sadnesses, too. ■

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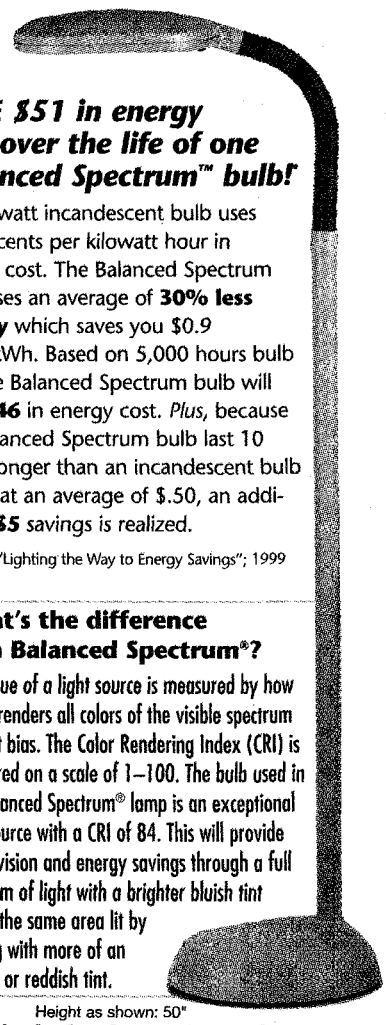

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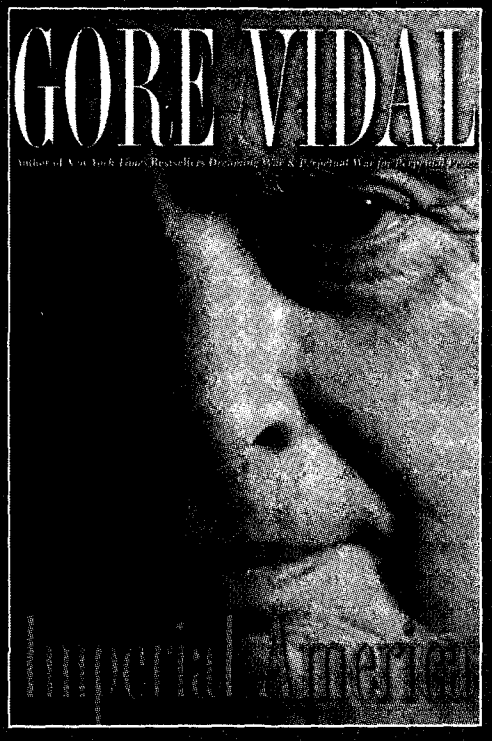

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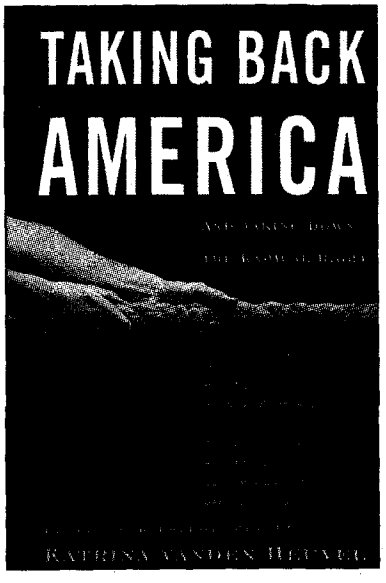

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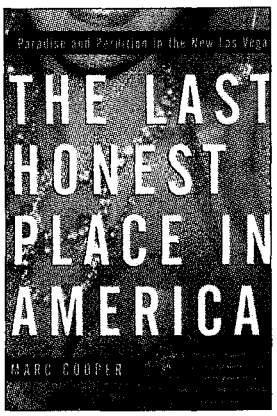

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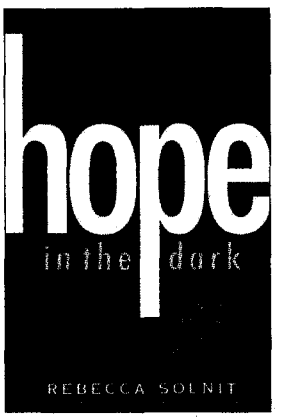

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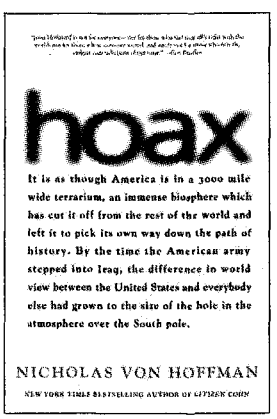
hoax
It is as though America is in a 3000 mile wide terrarium, an immense biosphere which has cut it off from the rest of the world and left it to pick its own way down the path of history. By the time the American army stepped into Iraq, the difference in world view between the United States and everybody else had grown to the size of the hole in the atmosphere over the South pole.
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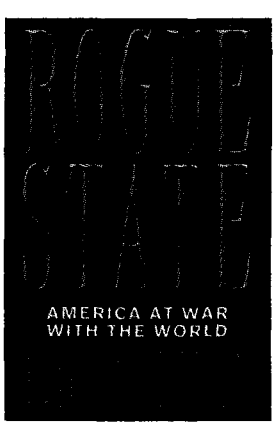

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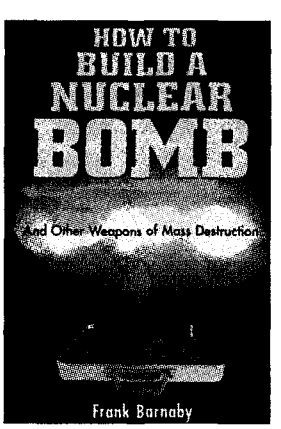

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Wild at Heart

VIVIAN GORNICK

AMERICAN SCREAM: Allen Ginsberg's "Howl" and the Making of the Beat Generation. By Jonah Raskin. California. 295 pp. $24.95.

COLLECTED LETTERS: 1944–1967. By Neal Cassady. Edited by Dave Moore. Introduced by Carolyn Cassady. Penguin. 512 pp. $18.

In 1947 Saul Bellow published a novel called *The Victim* in which a derelict character named Kirby Allbee haunts another named Asa Leventhal, claiming that Leventhal is responsible for his downfall. Kirby, one of Bellow's fabled fast talkers—all feverish self-abasement and joking insult—repeatedly baits Leventhal and at one point, when Leventhal murmurs something about Walt Whitman, says to him, "Whitman? You people like Whitman? What does Whitman mean to you people?"

Who could ever have dreamed that less than a decade after the publication of this novel not only would "you people" be announcing out loud that they liked Whitman, but it would appear that they themselves had reincarnated him. The day after Allen Ginsberg's celebrated 1955 reading of "Howl" in San Francisco, Lawrence Ferlinghetti sent Ginsberg a telegram that read, "I greet you at the beginning of a great career"—the phrase that Emerson had used, writing to Whitman upon the publication, exactly a hundred years earlier, of *Leaves of Grass*.

Fifty years later, it is safe to say that Allen Ginsberg is the poet who, within living memory, most closely resembles Whitman. He, like Whitman, wrote an emblematic American poem that became world famous; was experienced pre-eminently as a poet of the people, at home among the democratic masses; developed a public persona to match the one in his writing—hugely free-spirited and self-promoting, an open-hearted exhibitionist. And he, again like Whitman, is remembered as a man in possession of an extraordinary sweetness that, throughout his life, welled up repeatedly to astonish the hearts of all who encountered him.

I met Ginsberg only twice, the first time at Jack Kerouac's funeral in 1969. I was there for *The Village Voice*. It was my very first assignment as a working journalist. At the head of the viewing room stood the casket with Kerouac, hideously made up, lying in it. In the mourners' seats sat Kerouac's middle-class, French Canadian relatives—eyes narrowed, faces florid, arms crossed on their disapproving breasts. Around the casket—dipping, weaving, chanting *Om*—were Allen Ginsberg, Peter Orlovsky and Gregory Corso. Then there was Kerouac's final, caretaker wife, a woman old enough to be his mother, weeping bitterly and looking strangely isolated. I sat mesmerized, staring in all directions. Suddenly, Ginsberg was sitting beside me. "And who are you?" he asked quietly. I told him who I was. He nodded, and wondered if I was talking to people. Especially the wife. I must be sure to talk to her. "Oh, no," I said quickly. "I couldn't do that." Ginsberg nodded into space for a moment. "You must," he murmured. Then he looked directly into my eyes. "It's your job," he said softly. "You must do your job."

The second time we met, nearly twenty years later, was at an infamous meeting of the PEN board called to debate a letter (drafted by Ginsberg) that the Freedom-to-Write Committee had sent to Israel's prime minister, taking his government to task for censoring Palestinian and Israeli journalists. I sat in my seat, listening to Ginsberg read his letter aloud to a packed room. He was now in his 60s, his head bald, his beard trim, wearing an ill-fitting black suit, the voice as gentle as I remembered it and twice as dignified. Although the letter had been signed by Susan Sontag, William Styron and Grace Paley, among others, it was Ginsberg himself who drew fire from the opposition. In a communiqué that had been sent earlier to the committee, Cynthia Ozick had all but accused him of being an agent for the PLO; and now, the essence of the charge coming from the floor seemed to be, *It's people like you who are destroying Israel*. I remember Ginsberg standing there, his glasses shining, nodding in all directions, urging people toward compassionate reason. He never raised his voice, never spoke with heat or animosity, never stopped sounding thoughtful and judicious while all about him people were losing their heads. When he stepped from the microphone and was making his way through the crowd, I pressed his hand as he passed me and thanked him for the excellence of the letter's prose. He stopped, closed his other hand over mine and, looking directly into my eyes, said softly, "I know you. Don't I know you? I know you."

Allen Ginsberg was born in Newark, New Jersey, in 1926 to Louis and Naomi Ginsberg; the father was a published poet, a high school teacher and a socialist; the mother an enchanting free spirit, a passionate communist and a woman who lost her mental stability in her 30s (ultimately, she was placed in an institution and lobotomized). Allen and his brother grew up in a chaotic mixture of striving respectability, left-wing bohemianism and certifiable madness in the living room. It all felt large to the tormented, oversensitive boy who, discovering that he lusted after boys, began to feel mad himself and, like his paranoid parents, threatened by, yet defiant of, the America beyond the front door.

None of this accounts for Allen Ginsberg; it only describes the raw material that, when the time was right, would convert into a poetic vision of mythic proportion that merged brilliantly with its moment: the complicated aftermath of the Second World War characterized by atomic bomb anxiety, a manipulated terror of godless Communism, the strange pathos of *The Man in the Gray Flannel Suit* and the subterranean currents of romanticized lawlessness into which the men and women ultimately known as the Beats would funnel an old American devotion to the idea of revolutionary individualism.

When Ginsberg entered Columbia University in 1943 he was already possessed of a presentation of self, shall we say, that would make it impossible for him to gain the love of the teachers he most admired, namely Lionel Trilling and Mark Van Doren. (Trilling memorialized Ginsberg in his short story "Of This Time, Of That Place" as the brilliant student the academic narrator can experience only as mad.) To emulate these men would mean going into a kind of internal exile that Allen, even then, knew he could not sustain. His dilemma seemed profound. Then he met Jack Kerouac, also a student at Columbia. Through Kerouac he met William Burroughs; together they picked up a Times Square junkie poet named Herbert Huncke; and after that Neal Cassady, the wild man of all their dreams: a handsome, grown-up delinquent who drank, stole, read Nietzsche,

Vivian Gornick is at work on a biography of Elizabeth Cady Stanton, which will be published by Farrar, Straus & Giroux next spring.

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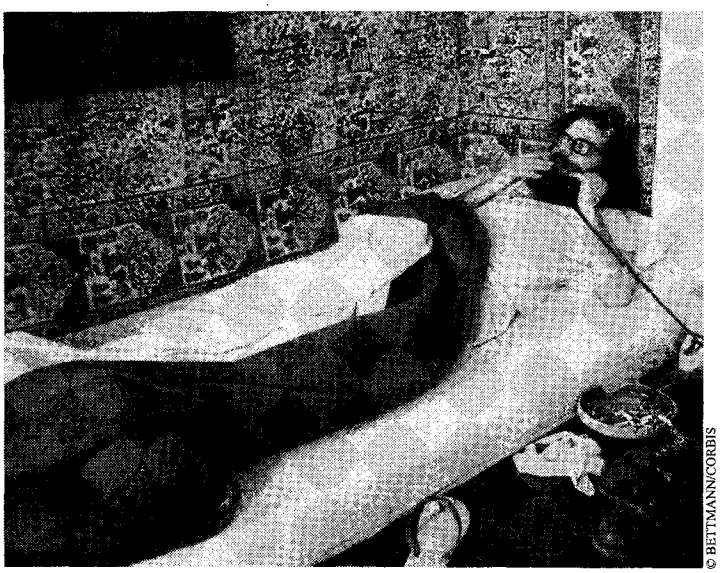
fucked like a machine and drove great distances at great speeds for the sake of movement itself. As Burroughs put it, "Wife and child may starve, friends exist only to exploit for gas money...Neal must move." Cassady, whose *Collected Letters: 1944–1967* are to be published in July by Penguin, became Dean Moriarty in *On the Road* and the Adonis of Denver in "Howl."

For Ginsberg, these men came to constitute a sacred company of inspired madmen destined to convert the poisoned atmosphere of America's cold war politics into one of restored beauty—through their writing. The conviction among them of literary destiny was powerful. And why not? People like Ginsberg, Kerouac and Cassady are born every hour on the hour: How often do their lives intersect with a political moment that endows their timeless hungers with the echoing response of millions, thereby persuading them that they are, indeed, emissaries of social salvation? What is remarkable among this bunch—considering how much they drank, got stoned and flung themselves across the country in search of heavenly despair—is how well they sustained one another throughout their faltering 20s, when life was all worldly rejection and self-dramatizing desperation.



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Allen Ginsberg at home, June 1966

In 1949, now 23 years old, depressed and at loose ends, Ginsberg let Herbert Huncke—a true criminal—crash at his apartment, where Huncke proceeded to stash an ever increasing amount of stolen goods. Inevitably, the police appeared at the door, and everyone was arrested. Rescued from a prison sentence by friends, family and his Columbia teachers, Ginsberg was sent to the New York State Psychiatric Institute, where he spent eight months that did, indeed, change his life. Here he met the man to whom he would dedicate "Howl."

Carl Solomon was Allen's double—a Bronx-born, bisexual, self-dramatizing, left-wing intellectual. They saw themselves in each other almost immediately. Solomon held out his hand and said, "I'm Kirilov" (a character in Dostoyevsky's *The Possessed*). Allen responded, "I'm Myshkin" (Dostoyevsky's fabled Idiot). There was, however, one important difference between them: Solomon had lived in Paris, was soaked in existentialist politics and literature, and here, at New York Psychiatric, he introduced Allen to the work of Genet, Artaud and Céline, the mad writers with whom he instantly felt at one. Ginsberg marveled at Solomon's melancholy brilliance and proceeded to mythicize it. If Carl was mad, it could only be that Amerika had driven him mad. When Ginsberg emerged from the institution, he had his vital insight in place: "I saw the best minds of my generation destroyed by/madness, starving hysterical naked,/dragging themselves through the negro streets at dawn/looking for an angry fix."

For the next few years he wandered, all over the country and halfway around the world, becoming a practicing Buddhist along the way. Arrived at last in San Francisco in 1954 (with Kerouac, Cassady and Corso dancing about him), here and now, in the American city experienced as most open (that is, farthest from the seats of Eastern power), he wrote his great poem, read it aloud one night in October of 1955—and awoke to find himself famous.

While thousands of young people responded to "Howl" as though they'd been waiting years to hear this voice speaking these words, the literary establishment promptly vilified it. Trilling hated the poem, John Hollander hated it, James Dickey hated it. And Norman Podhoretz hated it. Podhoretz hated it so much that he wrote about it twice, once in *The New Republic* and then again in *Partisan Review*. By the time these pieces were being written, *On the Road* had been published (*Naked Lunch* was coming right along behind it), and for Podhoretz the sky was falling. The Beats, he said, were the barbarians at the gate, rabble-rousers who "embraced homosexuality, jazz, dope-addiction and vagrancy" (he got that part right), at one with "the young savages in leather jackets who have been running amuck in the last few years with their switch-blades and zip guns." Jack Kerouac was cut to the quick, and wrote to complain that the Beats were about *beatitude*, not criminality; they were here to *rescue* America (from corporate death and atomic bomb politics), not destroy her.

In *American Scream*, Jonah Raskin, Ginsberg's latest biographer, recalls vividly the summer of 1957 when "Howl" was brought to trial in San Francisco on charges of obscenity, with a wealth of writers testifying on behalf of the poem's literary value. In retrospect—and this is a major insight of Raskin's—the trial can now be seen as an opening shot at the start of a culture war destined to throw long shadows across American life. And indeed, throughout the 1960s, both the poem and its author were celebrated, the former as a manifesto of the counterculture, the latter as one of its emblematic figures.

Today, nearly fifty years after it was written, "Howl" is never out of print, is read all over the world (it's been translated into more than two dozen languages) and by most standards is considered a literary classic. Like *Leaves of Grass*, it is an ingenious experiment with the American language that did what Ezra Pound said a great poem should do: make the language new. Its staccato phrasing, its mad juxtapositions and compacted images, its remarkable combining of the vernacular with the formal—obscene, slangy, religious, transcendent, speaking now in the voice of the poet, now of the hipster—is simply an astonishment. "Even today," as Raskin says, "reading the poem yields a feeling of intoxication. The words produce an electrical charge that is exhilarating."

In *American Scream*, Raskin sets out to tell the story of how Ginsberg came to write "Howl," tracing in a kaleidoscopic fashion the influences at work on the young Allen as he moved frantically through the years toward the moment of his posterity. The book eschews straightforward chronology for a technique of cross-cutting that returns us again and again to people, places and circumstances we thought we had left behind; and jumps ahead, as well, in the middle of an episode to include a detail or an observation that belongs to events still to come, in very much the way that a narrative is interrupt-

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ed or anticipated in a movie, or in conversation. This is meant to enrich the texture of the experience being shaped, but for many readers, this one included, the technique is wearisome.

That said, the book is a pleasure to read, as it is saturated in the atmosphere of its subject and brings to life the grainy texture of the political and cultural moment of Ginsberg's youth almost as strongly as it does the vivid figure standing squarely in the foreground. Raskin captures wonderfully Ginsberg's feverish hunger for poetry and glory as he moves through the late 1940s, prowling the streets of New York as if it were Dostoyevsky's Petersburg; rising in an English class at Columbia to terrify students and teachers alike with some brilliant, unpunctuated rant; looking for sex in Times Square; seeing Blake in a vision in his own kitchen; nodding wordlessly when the cops ask him if he is a homosexual.

Raskin also makes us see why Ginsberg survived his own youth while Kerouac and Cassady could not. They were all men of excess, but Ginsberg alone could put the excess to use. Neal Cassady was a drifter through and through. To read his letters—although the ones to his writer friends are richly literate—is to see a man perpetually on the run from himself. It was all drugs, drink, women and motion without a stop. He is forever in the car hurtling toward New York, Denver or California. If he stops, it's to get one woman pregnant, marry a second, start an affair with a third, all in what feels like the space of a month; then it's back in the car, writing to each one, "I'll be home in a week, babe, ten days at the latest." Except for the books, Kerouac was not so very different. Neither of these men could inhabit the space he actually occupied at any given moment. Each had a leak somewhere in the middle of himself that made experience drain exhaustingly away (both died in their 40s).

Ginsberg, on the other hand, was remarkably heart-whole; it made all the difference. His experience nourished him, gave him the strength to complete the self-transformation he had been bent on from the beginning. I don't think it an exaggeration to say that when he died at 70 his life had given new meaning to the word "self-created." For the formal poets and critics of his generation Ginsberg would remain only an original: the gifted, problematic amateur (in 1963 Robert Lowell wrote to Elizabeth Bishop, "The beats have blown away, the professionals have returned"). For American culture, however, Ginsberg had, like Walt Whitman, become an inspirited incarnation: the authentic made-in-America holy fool. ■

Top Gun

JAMES M. McPHERSON

LINCOLN'S WAR: The Untold Story of America's Greatest President as Commander in Chief. By Geoffrey Perret. Random House. 470 pp. $35.

LINCOLN'S EMANCIPATION PROCLAMATION: The End of Slavery in America. By Allen C. Guelzo. Simon & Schuster. 332 pp. $26.

LINCOLN'S LAST MONTHS. By William C. Harris. Harvard. 320 pp. $27.95.

Of the making of many books about Abraham Lincoln there is no end. But the rest of this updated proverb from Ecclesiastes may be inapplicable: Much study of these books is not necessarily a weariness of the flesh. New research, new perspectives, new questions and new answers to old questions about this complex and endlessly fascinating man continue to inspire books that are a stimulation of the mind, if not also of the flesh.

In the current crop of Lincoln books, two focus on the most important achievements for which he is remembered: directing the war for the Union that preserved the United States as one nation; and proclaiming freedom for the slaves. Geoffrey Perret's *Lincoln's War* is the first systematic study of Lincoln as Commander in Chief in a half-century. Having written several books of military history plus biographies of Ulysses Grant, Dwight Eisenhower and John Kennedy, Perret would seem well qualified to tackle this subject. The result, unfortunately, proves otherwise.

The Constitution specifies that "the President shall be Commander in Chief of the Army and Navy of the United States" but fails to define the scope or limits of the President's powers when acting in this capacity. In *Lincoln's War*, Perret makes a good case for his thesis that "it fell to Lincoln to create the role of commander in chief." By invoking his "war powers" (which are nowhere mentioned in the Constitution), Lincoln in effect pre-empted Congress's authority to declare war and define war aims. He called up the militia to suppress insurrection, suspended the writ of habeas corpus and arrested enemy sympathizers, proclaimed emancipation as a "military necessity," appointed military governors of occupied portions of Confederate states, made key decisions concerning military strategy, overruled and when necessary dismissed army commanders and established the conditions of peace and reconstruction. Lincoln's understanding of his war powers was breathtaking. "I conceive that I may in time of emergency do things on military grounds which cannot be done constitutionally by Congress," he declared in 1864. "The war power was Lincoln's creation," writes Perret, and "this book tells how he did that and, how, in so doing, he created the modern presidency."

Perret's story was hardly untold before he told it, however. And if some things in his book *were* previously untold, it is because they were not true. *Lincoln's War* is riddled with an appalling number of errors large and small—by my count at least 120 of them, including multiple mistakes in the same paragraph on a single subject. For example, a paragraph on the battle of Chancellorsville contains four errors, and another four occur in a paragraph about the Conscription Act of 1863. Perret describes a "furious fight" for Hazel Grove at Chancellorsville while Union soldiers "walked up Marye's Heights like tourists." In fact, the opposite was true: Union forces withdrew from Hazel Grove without a fight while those who attacked and carried Marye's Heights suffered heavy casualties.

Some minor errors creep into every book, of course, and they would not be worth mentioning if this book had only the normal quota of such mistakes. But the level of carelessness and ignorance manifested by the number and importance of miscues in *Lincoln's War* seriously compromises its integrity and undermines its value. Many of the errors group themselves in patterns. For a military historian, Perret seems particularly confused about matters of geography and terrain important to military operations. The area between Washington and Richmond was not "nearly all dense woods." Paducah, Kentucky, and Corinth, Mississippi, are not on the Mississippi River. Perret has the Tennessee and

James M. McPherson, a professor of history at Princeton University, is the author of many books on the Civil War, most recently The Illustrated Battle Cry of Freedom *(Oxford).*

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Shenandoah rivers flowing in the wrong direction; on one occasion he confuses the Rappahannock and York rivers and on another the Rappahannock and Pamunkey. He also mixes up Gaithersburg, Maryland, with Martinsburg, West Virginia. There was no railroad within thirty miles of Yorktown in 1862; and in 1864 Union Gen. Philip Sheridan did not drive Confederate Gen. Jubal Early to the "outskirts of Richmond" but to Brown's Gap, 100 miles northwest of Richmond.

In a puzzling number of cases, Perret gets wrong the rank, date of promotion or unit of command for army and naval officers. Details on tactics, terrain, numbers of troops engaged or casualties are wrong for several important campaigns and battles: First Bull Run, Fort Donelson, Pea Ridge, the Corinth campaign of May 1862, First Winchester, Perryville, the battle of Corinth in October 1862, Second Bull Run, the campaign and battle of Antietam, Chancellorsville and the Vicksburg assault of May 1863. For good measure, Perret confuses the 1864 battle of Nashville with the battle of Franklin in the same year. In his discussions of Stonewall Jackson's Shenandoah Valley campaign in May–June 1862 and of the maneuvering before Second Bull Run in August, Perret has the units in the wrong places. If they had been where he claims they were, strategic decisions by Lincoln and his army commanders in both cases might have been quite different.

I could go on only at the risk of tedium. But some errors are so egregious or inexplicable that they must be mentioned. In a discussion of the legal status of slaves as property, Perret interjects the irrelevant and ludicrous assertion that in 1861 the right to vote "extended only to the one-third of the adult male population that paid property taxes above a prescribed level." That had not been true for at least forty years. By 1860 virtually all white male citizens could vote, and more than 80 percent of them did so in the presidential election of that year. In his treatment of war finance, Perret maintains that "one day in the summer of 1862" Lincoln decided that he must issue paper money even if he had to "violate the Constitution." By the fall of that year the President by fiat had "created his own" currency. Nothing about this narrative is correct. Congress passed the Legal Tender Act creating the famous "greenbacks" in February 1862, the law was constitutional and Lincoln's only role in the process was to sign the bill. Perret commits several miscues in his discussion of emancipation and the enlistment of black soldiers in the Union army. The worst of them concerns the recruiting of black troops in Kentucky, which was so controversial, he writes, that "not one black regiment was raised there." The matter was controversial, all right, but a total of 23,700 black soldiers were enlisted in Kentucky and organized in some twenty regiments of US Colored Troops.

Perret's sloppiness on these and other issues reduces the credibility of some of his major arguments. He refers frequently to what he calls Lincoln's "Richmond obsession." The Commander in Chief focused obsessively on the capture of Richmond, Perret insists, to the neglect of the Mississippi Valley and the lower South, west of the Appalachians. Most historians disagree; indeed, a consensus exists that it was the Confederates who neglected these Western theaters, where Union forces enjoyed their greatest success and laid the groundwork for ultimate victory. Perret concedes the success but gives Lincoln little credit for it, preferring to reiterate that "Lincoln... remained obsessed with ending the war by taking Richmond."

Never mind that from the summer of 1862 on, Lincoln was convinced that the destruction of enemy armies—not the capture of Richmond—was the key to winning the war. Perret does quote Lincoln's famous

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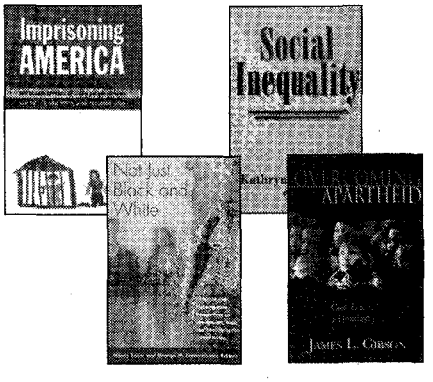

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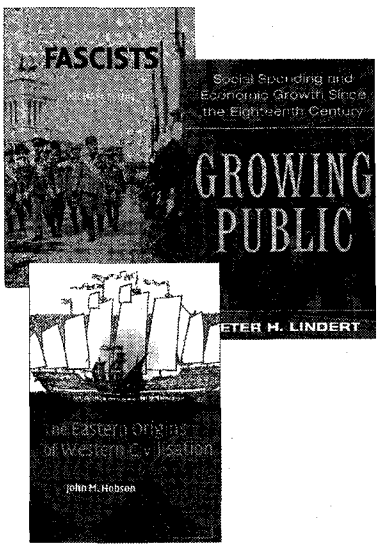

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telegram to Gen. Joseph Hooker on June 10, 1963: "I think *Lee's* Army and not *Richmond* is your true objective point." Perret considers this dispatch an anomaly: "It stands alone, unsupported, unrepeated." He could not be more wrong. Lincoln made the same point frequently to Generals George McClellan, George Gordon Meade, Henry Halleck and other commanders. "To attempt to fight the enemy slowly back to his intrenchments in Richmond...is an idea I have been trying to repudiate for quite a year," wrote Lincoln in September 1863. "I have constantly desired the Army of the Potomac, to make Lee's army, and not Richmond, its objective point. If our army can not fall upon the enemy and hurt him where he is, it is plain to see that it can gain nothing by attempting to follow him over a succession of intrenched lines into a fortified city." Tellingly, Perret does not quote this statement.

Some of the supposed Lincoln statements Perret does quote may be apocryphal. Perhaps no other person in history has been credited so often with saying things he never said. In the decades after the Civil War and Lincoln's martyrdom, hundreds of his contemporaries wrote articles or books reporting what Lincoln had allegedly said to them on various occasions. Some of these direct or indirect quotations provide important and reasonably reliable evidence on significant matters; others are spurious or at best doubtful. Perret cites or quotes too many in the latter two categories. He seems unaware of the painstaking scholarship of the late Don Fehrenbacher, one of the most knowledgeable experts on Lincoln. Fehrenbacher's immensely valuable book (written with his wife), *Recollected Words of Abraham Lincoln*, sifts these sources and grades them on a scale of reliability. To "a quotation about whose authenticity there is more than average doubt" he assigns a grade of D. A "quotation that is probably not authentic" gets an E. Several of Perret's sources earn D's or E's. One of them, for example, was Lucius Chittenden's *Recollections of President Lincoln and His Administration* (1891). Fehrenbacher considers Chittenden to be one of those "who colored their memories with their imagination until their accounts became wholly unsafe as historical data."

Lincoln's War is essentially a study of military strategy. It also chronicles the evolution of Lincoln's policy of emancipation and, ultimately, the complete abolition of slavery. But Perret does not integrate these stories very well. He might have done so by linking military and national strategy. National strategy is the mobilization of all the nation's resources in time of war: political, economic, diplomatic, social and cultural as well as strictly military resources. Military strategy involves the effort to bring the nation's armed forces to bear against the enemy to their best advantage. Lincoln had an intuitive grasp of the integral relationship between these two forms of strategy. Slavery was the principal hinge between them. In the war's first year, Lincoln consciously avoided a policy of emancipation because his national strategy required the mobilization of the border slave states and of Northern Democrats for the war. Both groups would have been alienated by a premature effort to turn it into a war against slavery. But in the Confederacy, slave labor was a crucial resource mobilized by the Southern war effort. By the war's second year, Lincoln became convinced that, as he put it, "the colored population is the great *available* and yet *unavailed* of force for restoring the Union.... We must free the slaves or be ourselves subdued. The slaves [are] undeniably an element of strength to those who [have] their service, and we must decide whether that element should be with us or against us."

Lincoln's Emancipation Proclamation of January 1, 1863, which also authorized the enlistment of black soldiers in Union armies, thus became an essential component of his national strategy. But such a strategy must be compatible with the nation's war aims—the North could not mobilize freed slaves to fight for a Union in which slavery would continue to exist. So the abolition of slavery became a *goal* as well as a *means* of Northern victory. That is why Lincoln justified his Emancipation Proclamation as "an act of justice" as well as a "military necessity."

The complex story of how the war to preserve the Union evolved into a war to give that Union "a new birth of freedom" has been told many times—but never so well as Allen Guelzo tells it in *Lincoln's Emancipation Proclamation*. Once considered Lincoln's greatest achievement, the proclamation's reputation has declined in recent decades. Citing its dry legalistic language, the eminent historian Richard Hofstadter famously declared that the proclamation "had all the moral grandeur of a bill of lading." By limiting its application to states or parts of states under Confederate control, critics assert, Lincoln's proclamation freed no flesh-and-blood slaves and left those in areas controlled by the Union forces still in slavery. Real emancipation, insist many African-American historians, was accomplished by the slaves themselves. By running away and entering Union lines during the war, they not only liberated their own persons but also forced the issue of eman-

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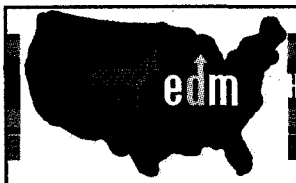
cipation on a laggard Lincoln. "Freedom did not come to the slaves from words on paper," writes the Columbia University historian Barbara Fields, but "from the initiative of the slaves." And the institution of slavery came to an end with the Thirteenth Amendment in 1865, not with the Emancipation Proclamation in 1863.

Conceding the partial validity of these critiques, Guelzo painstakingly disentangles truth from distortion and error. The proclamation's language was dry and technical because it was framed by a lawyer/President who wanted to make it as legally airtight and politically inoffensive as possible at a time when a large part of the Northern population opposed emancipation. The proclamation applied only to areas in rebellion because its legal basis was the President's war power as Commander in Chief to seize enemy property being used to wage war against the United States. Even if little of this property was instantly liberated on January 1, 1863, the proclamation constituted a promise that it would be carried out by advancing Union armies. As Lincoln said many times thereafter, "the promise being made, must be kept." The physical achievement of freedom did indeed occur when slaves came within Union lines. But it also happened when the armies moved into areas where slaves lived. Guelzo persuasively maintains that, by making freedom an official policy, the proclamation produced a quantum leap in the number of slaves seeking that freedom. Word of Lincoln's edict spread widely by the slaves' "grapevine telegraph" and "triggered a cascade of running away in 1863 that began sweeping off the underpinnings of slavery."

Lincoln understood better than anyone else that the proclamation was a war measure that would cease to operate when the war was over. He also worried that the courts might invalidate it retroactively on the grounds that the Commander in Chief could seize enemy property but could not permanently free slave property. Lincoln's preferred method for ending slavery was by the constitutional actions of the slave states themselves. In 1862 he tried to persuade the loyal border states to take such action, hoping that a domino effect might topple slavery state by state until all were free. The border states refused. Lincoln moved beyond them to issue the proclamation, and in 1864 he ran for re-election on a platform promising a constitutional amendment to end slavery everywhere. Lincoln called the Thirteenth Amendment a "King's cure" that "alone can meet and cover all cavils." The Emancipation Proclamation was the single most important step in the journey to that King's cure. Guelzo concludes that even if the Emancipation Proclamation was "not...the most eloquent of Lincoln's writings, it was unquestionably the most epochal," and that even if Lincoln was not "the most perfect friend black Americans have ever had," he manifestly "was the most significant."

Although he does not express it so unequivocally, William Harris agrees with this appraisal. His study of the last six months of Lincoln's life, from his re-election to the assassination, includes a lucid account of Lincoln's resistance to powerful pressure in 1864 to back away from his commitment to emancipation. Harris also emphasizes the President's key role in getting the Thirteenth Amendment through Congress. Lincoln's reputation as "the Great Emancipator," writes Harris, "is truly deserved." Under his "careful, step-by-step management," the "Constitution had been changed to a document of freedom."

Guelzo and Harris have driven a stake into the heart of recent arguments—especially those of Lerone Bennett Jr. in his *Forced Into Glory: Abraham Lincoln's White Dream* (2000)—that Lincoln did



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more to hinder than to help the cause of ending slavery. While Guelzo keeps his focus on the central theme of emancipation, however, Harris covers a wide array of issues that Lincoln faced during his last months in office. Indeed, the book at times becomes a virtual laundry list of such issues without clear distinctions between the important and the routine: patronage, foreign policy, emancipation, reconstruction, Indian policy, licit and illicit trade with the South, re-election, peace terms and negotiations, and the assassination. Part of one chapter documents the increasingly "careworn" and haggard countenance of the President as he grappled with these problems. "Though only fifty-five years of age when re-elected," Harris writes, "Lincoln was worn down and unable to shake his feeling of dread at the prospect of four more years of the presidency.... It is conceivable that Lincoln, after having achieved his purposes of saving the Union and ending slavery, would have seriously contemplated resigning as president at war's end." Despite this startling speculation—for which there is no evidence whatsoever—Harris stops short of implying that the assassination was therefore a blessing in disguise.

Next to emancipation, the most challenging problems for Lincoln during these months were terms of peace with the Confederacy and terms of reconstruction for the South. The platform on which he ran for re-election demanded "unconditional surrender" of the enemy as well as a constitutional amendment to abolish slavery. Lincoln never deviated from these terms. At the Hampton Roads meeting in February 1865 between Lincoln and Secretary of State William Seward for the Union and three Southern commissioners headed by Confederate Vice President Alexander Stephens, Lincoln reiterated this policy of unconditional surrender—without using the words. The words he did use, however, meant precisely that: "The restoration of the national authority throughout all the States. No receding, by the Executive of the United States on the Slavery question. No cessation of hostilities short of an end of the war, and the disbanding of all forces hostile to the government." Because Lincoln also promised liberal terms of amnesty to Southerners who gave up their rebellion, Harris denies that Lincoln's policy was one of unconditional surrender. But the Confederate leader Jefferson Davis, who denounced Lincoln's terms as a "humiliating surrender" and the *New York Times*, which declared that "we have always demanded 'unconditional surrender,'" were closer to the mark.

On the issue of voting rights for blacks in the reconstructed South, Harris insists that Lincoln intended to leave the question up to whites in the restored states. Other historians have pointed to evidence that during the winter of 1864–65 Lincoln was moving toward the radical Republican position of requiring at least limited black suffrage in the reconstructed South. In what turned out to be the last speech of his life, two days after Confederate General Robert E. Lee surrendered at Appomattox, Lincoln said that he would like literate freedmen and those who had fought in the Union army to have the right to vote, and hinted at a forthcoming "new announcement to the people of the South." It is not far-fetched to state that Lincoln gave his life for the cause of black voting rights. Standing in the crowd listening to the President that evening of April 11, 1865, was John Wilkes Booth. When he heard those words, Booth turned to a companion and snarled, "That means nigger citizenship. Now, by God, I'll put him through. That is the last speech he will ever make." ■

Description of a Struggle

TIM PARKS

NOTES FROM UNDERGROUND. By Fyodor Dostoyevsky. Translated by Richard Pevear and Larissa Volokhonsky. Everyman's Library. 126 pp. $17.

"You cannot take *a man who was all struggle*," wrote Tolstoy of Dostoyevsky, after his great rival's death, "and set him up on a monument for the instruction of posterity."

To which struggle exactly was Count Tolstoy referring? Certainly not the liberal cause that had condemned Dostoyevsky to spending four years in a Siberian labor camp and six more as a soldier in the army. In his mid-20s Fyodor Mikhailovich had fallen under the charismatic influence of the revolutionary Nikolay Speshnev and joined his secret society. Immediately he was anxious: Speshnev had lent him a large sum of money. How could the young writer ever repay this "Mephistopheles of my own" and escape this compromising situation? Three days after being arrested and placed in solitary confinement, Dostoyevsky tells us, he felt an enormous sense of relief and serenity. Later he would remark: "Penal servitude saved me."

Such moments of relief, of internal conflict resolved in extreme well-being, feature prominently in Dostoyevsky's work. Usually they follow a dramatic surrender of pride on the part of a powerful personality: A murderer confesses, or the great man kneels before the holy hermit or the innocent prostitute, though never before having passed through agonies of uncertainty and rebellion. *Notes From Underground* (1864), however, is unique among Dostoyevsky's writings in that it begins with a struggle that is long over and that has ended in failure: "I am a sick man.... I am a wicked man," our anonymous narrator opens his hundred-page monologue. More than any of his other works, this will be Dostoyevsky's justification for a life that is all struggle.

Notes is organized in two parts: a long statement of the narrator's present situation and vision of the world; and an account of a dramatic incident in his past. The voice speaking describes himself as a minor civil servant who has retired on the back of a modest inheritance. In short, a nobody. His illness and wickedness, we soon learn, are the result of "consciousness," which is always and in every form "a sickness." It led him to be acutely sensitive to the good and the beautiful while interminably choosing to act in an ugly and repulsive fashion. This painful contradiction caused the narrator years of unhappy struggle as he tried to reconcile egoism with moral sensibility. But at last he is worn out, he has "lost any wish to struggle." More intellectually feverish than ever, he gnashes his teeth in obscurity, consoling himself with the thought that "it had to be so," that "this perhaps was my normal condition."

The circumstances in which Dostoyevsky wrote this disturbing *incipit* are worth bearing in mind. Discharged from the army in 1859 at age 37, he had brought his new wife to St. Petersburg and begun publishing, together with his brother Mikhail, a politi-

Tim Parks is a novelist living in Italy. He teaches literary translation at Iulm University, Milan. His most recent book is Judge Savage *(Arcade).*

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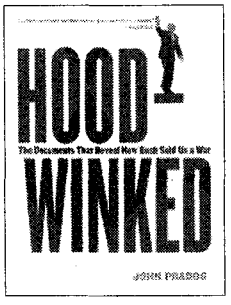

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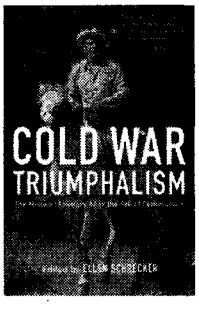

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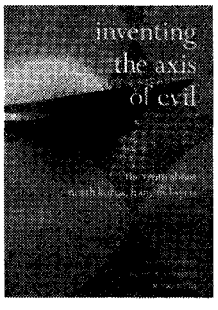

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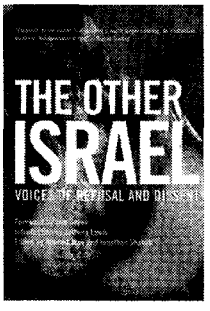

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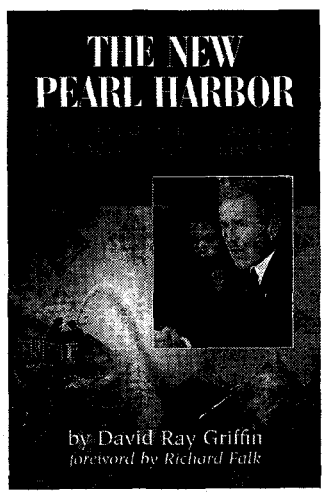

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cal and literary magazine, *Time*. The magazine was successful, the writer's career on the rise, but his marriage was unhappy. Maria Dimitrievna suffered from tuberculosis and frequently accused her husband of being "a rogue and a rascal and a criminal." Perhaps to be worthy of her accusations, Dostoyevsky began an affair with the 23-year-old Apollinaria Suslova and took time out to travel in Europe, where he discovered the joys of roulette.

In 1863 the censors closed *Time*, plunging the Dostoyevsky brothers into dire financial trouble. But while waiting for permission to reopen, Fyodor again set out to travel in Europe, despite the fact that his wife was now seriously ill. Claiming he needed to consult Western doctors about his epilepsy, he headed for Paris, where his young mistress was waiting. The beloved Suslova, however, now decided that there would be no more sex between them. They would travel to Italy as friends, not lovers. Holier than the average adulterer, Dostoyevsky went along with this, while making frequent attempts to get the girl back between the sheets. She refused, but generously lent him money to get home when the gambling bouts left him penniless.

After three months away, then, Dostoyevsky returns to Russia to find his wife is at death's door and his brother desperate to gather material for the new magazine that the censors have given permission to publish: Fyodor Mikhailovich must write something, at once. The time for renunciation has come, but Fyodor is still so close to the spree...

Notes From Underground, the book that emerged from these exigencies, written in haste as his wife was dying, is remarkable for the way the polarities of good and evil are simultaneously present throughout but without any possibility of the narrator's taking a firm stand either way; instead he offers a perverse, self-lacerating enjoyment of their simultaneity and incompatibility: "These influxes of 'everything beautiful and lofty,'" he tells us of his more noble thoughts, "used also to come to me during my little debauches...and yet they did not annihilate the little debauch...on the contrary, it was as if they enlivened it by contrast and came in exactly the proportion required for a good sauce. The sauce here consisted of contradiction and suffering, of tormenting inner analysis and all these torments and tormenticules lent my little debauch a certain piquancy, even meaning."

Yet it would be a mistake to think of *Notes* as primarily a private document. One of the consequences of a strict censorship that made direct statements on many issues impossible was that Russian fiction in this period was always understood as a disguised form of political debate. So no sooner has Dostoyevsky established the perverse psychology of his narrator than he starts to use the phenomenon of his unhealthy egoism to launch an attack on the recent novel *What Is to Be Done?* by the revolutionary theorist Nikolai Chernyshevsky, an attack that takes up the whole first part of the book.

A word must be said here on Dostoyevsky's idiosyncratic style when entering the political fray. Throughout the nineteenth century a fierce debate raged in Russia between westward-looking reformers and czarist conservatives. At issue were the condition of the serfs, the authority of the czar. In his editorial for the opening issue of *Time* in 1861, Dostoyevsky makes the strange claim that what will distinguish his paper from others is that, unlike his political opponents, he is really convinced of what he is saying,

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even if it may sound as though taken from a "copybook of maxims." In the following editorials he goes on to attack the ideas of the Westernized liberals, while sympathizing with their generous spirit, and to support the conservative ideas of the czarist camp while attacking their reactionary harshness. The terms of public debate are thus undermined. No idea can be judged without consideration of the mentality that anchors it in reality.

Needless to say, this peculiar approach exercised no political influence, completely confused the censors and was partly responsible for the decision to close down *Time* in 1863. So as Dostoyevsky embarks on his first piece for the new magazine, he is determined that there be no mistake: He absolutely and implacably opposes the revolutionary Nikolai Chernyshevsky.

Chernyshevsky was an optimist proposing an ethics of rational egoism. Far from struggling with irreconcilable opposites, the characters in *What Is to Be Done?* show how a person's real self-interest, when properly understood, is always compatible with the general good. Thus the two young heroes of the novel, who are in love with the same woman, are able to sort out their problems without pain or conflict. Thus, if everybody acts selfishly and in his or her own interest (properly understood), society can be reorganized to the benefit of everyone.

At first glance the target seems too easy to be interesting. "Oh, the babe!" our underground narrator exclaims, having summarized Chernyshevsky's position, "Oh, the pure, innocent child!" And he raises the objection that if one's best interests can be determined by reason and if one then inevitably acts in accordance with those interests, all one's actions can be predetermined, a state of affairs man instinctively resists. He himself, the narrator claims, frequently and deliberately acts against his best interests, since the highest good is not happiness or material wealth but simply this freedom to do as and how one wishes. As a result of this argument, the first part of the book is often taken as a defense of free will over determinism, even if that means accepting unhappy and unattractive phenomena like our sick and spiteful narrator.

But *Notes* is a much more radical and disturbing document than that. For Dostoyevsky had the immense good fortune that the enemy of the moment provided him with the stimulus for an exploration of the very possibility of speaking of selfhood and self-interest at all, something that must have been much on the author's mind after his own erratic behavior of recent months. Here the monologue form is crucial. "I am a wicked man," the narrator declares. But only a few moments later he claims: "as a matter of fact, I was never able to become wicked." Indeed, "I never even managed to become anything: neither wicked nor good, neither a scoundrel nor an honest man, neither a hero nor an insect."

One observes here, as ever, Dostoyevsky's tendency to see only opposite and mutually exclusive alternatives, all equally impossible for our narrator, since, whichever way he leans, his brain is "swarming" with "opposite tendencies." There were thus two related struggles in his past: one between good and evil, selfishness and renunciation, and, through that, the struggle to become someone. It is because our narrator has failed in both struggles that he must

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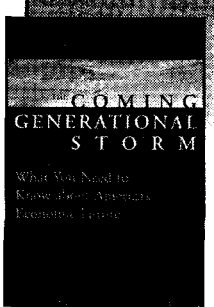

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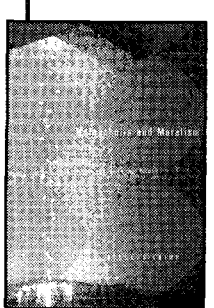

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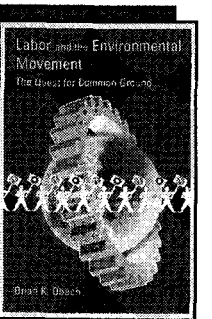

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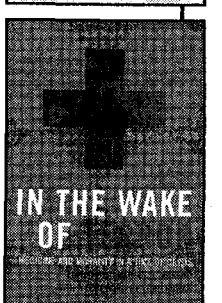

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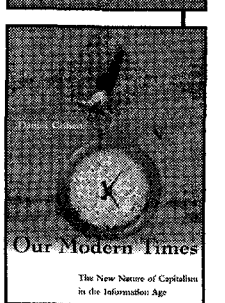

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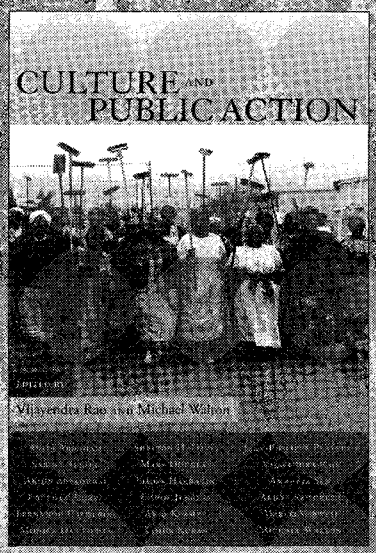

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remain anonymous. Selfish, he has not a self worthy of a name. "An intelligent man of the nineteenth century," he defends himself, "must be and is morally obliged to be primarily a characterless being."

Character, the narrator argues, is consolidated in action, good or bad, but the corrosive nature of intellectual thought constantly undermines the basis of action, because one senses its futility. Imagining someone who is able to act, to take revenge, for example, the narrator remarks:

> Well, sirs, it is just such an ingenuous man that I regard as the real, normal man.... I envy such a man to the point of extreme bile. He is stupid...but perhaps a normal man ought to be stupid, how do you know? Perhaps it's even very beautiful. And I am the more convinced of this, so to speak, suspicion, seeing that if, for example one takes the antithesis of the normal man, that is, the man of heightened consciousness, who came, of course, not from the bosom of nature but from a retort (this is almost mysticism, gentlemen, but I suspect that, too) this retort man sometimes folds before his antithesis so far that he honestly regards himself, with all his heightened consciousness as a mouse and not a man. A highly conscious mouse, perhaps, but a mouse all the same, whereas here we have a man, and consequently...and so on....

Such self-deconstructing reflection not only ridicules centuries of Enlightenment optimism, but opens a wound in the reader's relationship with the narrative voice. Who is it really who is speaking? Since the man who doesn't act has no real relationship with anyone (he admits that the "gentlemen" he addresses are fictitious, mere rhetorical constructs), since he constantly contradicts himself, since he is often not sure himself whether he is lying or not, we begin to feel that he is no more than a voice stretched across time. At moments of ellipsis—and there are many—he simply ceases to exist.

The style of *Notes* reinforces our doubts. It is dense with references to scenes and rhetoric from well-known novels of the recent past. This is taken from Gogol, that from Pushkin or Turgenev. The narrator begins to dream, but then realizes he is fantasizing something he read somewhere. He frequently refers to his bookish imagination, suggesting that his mind can inhabit well-worn but contradictory positions without having any investment in them. Or, worse still, without knowing whether he has any investment in them. The statement reminds us of Dostoyevsky's perception that his political opponents often put forward positions without really believing in them. At this point, as with the Hollywood habit of quoting interminably from previous movies, we have the growing and very modern concern that every statement put before us comes wrapped in a sticky layer of parody. Nothing can be taken seriously except the absence of a convincing seriousness, something inevitable once a reliable identity has been lost. In such a situation, the "struggle" is toward truly holding a position, any position, even if it seems taken from "a copybook of maxims."

When not falling into quotation, Dostoyevsky's underground voice invents neologisms and syntactical tics all its own. Language is either private to the point of excluding the listener or so worn out and public as to mean nothing. This puts the translator under considerable pressure. In his introduction to the new Everyman translation Richard Pevear attacks the tendency of other translations to normalize the book's style, claiming that he and his translation partner, Larissa Volokhonsky, have done all they can to reproduce its idiosyncrasies. Our problem is that the idiosyncrasies of the original arose from the Russian language and in a Russian context. Their meaning, or undermining of meaning, depended on the readers' recognition of a quotation, on the perceived distance between a specific tic and normal usage. Where context is all, translation is arduous. Pevear's aims are admirable and the new text always intriguing, but there are times when its oddly shifting registers seem more to do with literal translation than creative prose. If nothing else, however, the unevenness alerts us to Dostoyevsky's anticipation of Modernism. When a writer's voice could be confidently public without seeming parodic, such difficulties did not arise.

Aside from the roulette table, another form of gambling in which Dostoyevsky indulged was that of the anomalous publishing contract. Two years after finishing *Notes From Underground* and while working on *Crime and Punishment*, he took an advance to write a novel of more than 160 pages. If he didn't deliver by November of the same year, he would have to pay a huge fine, and if he didn't finish by December, the publisher could have all his work for the next nine years completely free. Why had Dostoyevsky agreed to such mad terms? Why did he wait till four weeks before the deadline to begin writing?

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The answer, as with his roulette playing, seems to have been his need to feel that he was chosen, that he was a great and not an ordinary man. This, after all, is Raskolnikov's obsession in *Crime and Punishment*. If he won at roulette, if he finished his book in time, then God had chosen him, he had an identity. If not, then he could cease to struggle. The book he wrote, or rather, for speed's sake, dictated, was *The Gambler*, which is to say, the man who risks in order to become someone.

The narrator of *Notes* also dreams of being a writer. Once he actually wrote something, but the publishers turned it down. "I found this quite vexing. There were times when I was simply choking with spite." Denied recognition, his dreams became vaguer: "I blindly believed then that through some miracle...all this [his squalid life] would suddenly extend, expand; suddenly a horizon of appropriate activity would present itself, beneficent, beautiful, and, above all, *quite ready-made*...and thus I would suddenly step forth under God's heaven all but on a white horse and wreathed in laurels."

But the great transformation never occurs. Unlike his creator, the narrator is not chosen and does not go on struggling to be so; denied "God's heaven," he remains underground, unknown, secret, multiple. The question that the second part of the *Notes* poses is: In the modern urban world of individuals "cut off from the soil," which is to say, from the obvious roles offered by traditional communal relationships, what becomes of the proud and ambitious ego without the redemption of celebrity? "A secondary role was incomprehensible to me," the narrator tells us, "and that was precisely why, in reality, I so calmly filled the last. Either hero or mud, there was no in between."

While the first part of the *Notes* is all argument, the second is all narrative. The story is simple and schematic. Going back to a time when the narrator was 24, we are given, one by one, his encounters with an anonymous army officer, with his boss, with his old school friends, with his servant and with a woman. In each case, our antihero tries to establish a relationship that would offer the gratification of recognition and identity, or, failing that, at least the exercise of power.

The army officer, a man of superior social status, casually shoves the narrator out of his way at a billiard table without paying him any attention. Insulted, the narrator pathetically and comically seeks to create a situation where he can bump into the man and force him to fight a duel, something that would amount to a recognition of equality. When he does finally pluck up the courage to bump into him, the officer still pays no attention, but at least our anonymous sufferer can pride himself on having acted in some way.

Unable to live in a completely solipsistic world "for longer than three months at a time," he goes to visit his boss, who

> lived in four little rooms, low-ceilinged... of a most economical and yellow appearance. The host usually sat in the study, on a leather sofa in front of the desk, along with some gray-haired guest.... They talked about excise, negotiations in the Senate, salaries, promotions.... My mind would grow dull, I'd break into a sweat... paralysis hovered over me; but this was good and beneficial. On returning home, I'd put off for a while my desire to embrace the whole of mankind.

This is barely more satisfactory than the encounter with the officer. But the narrator has an old school acquaintance, Simonov, whom he sees and occasionally hits up for a loan. One day at Simonov's he meets two other old schoolmates, who are arranging a small farewell dinner party at a hotel for a fourth acquaintance, Zverkov. Irritated that he hasn't been invited, the narrator insists on inviting himself.

The evening is a comic masterpiece and, for the narrator, an unmitigated disaster. Zverkov, in his small way, is a celebrity, an army officer with a modest fortune. Despite his mediocrity, his three friends worship him. He is someone. Immediately, the only relation that the narrator of *Notes* can imagine with Zverkov is one of competition; he must force his friends to grant him the same status. He gets drunk, insults them, challenges Zverkov to a duel and is laughed at and finally ignored. When the others set off to end the evening in a brothel, the narrator borrows money to chase after them, alternating fantasies of self-abasement where he begs forgiveness with equally crazy plans to slap Zverkov's face and force him to a fight. Arriving at the brothel, it is to find that his friends have disappeared. At once it's clear that this development was just an excuse on Dostoyevsky's part to bring our narrator into the presence of a woman.

One day, recounts Leonid Grossman in his biography of the author, while Dostoyevsky was dictating *The Gambler* to his young copyist, Anna, he told her that he was at a crossroads in life and had three choices: "to go east, to Constantinople or Jerusalem and remain there for ever; to go abroad for roulette and give himself up

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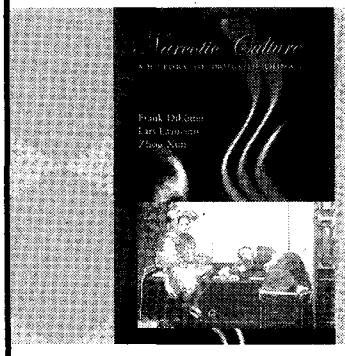

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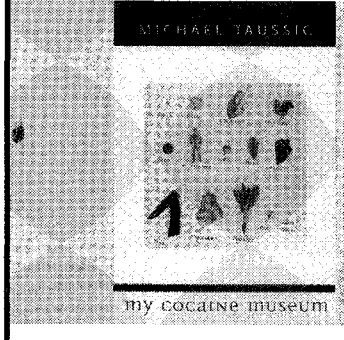

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entirely to gambling; or to seek happiness in a second marriage. Anna advised him to take the last course." Not long afterward, Dostoyevsky proposed to the girl.

What do these three choices signify? "Constantinople or Jerusalem" would appear to be the way of renunciation, sainthood; gambling abroad, the way of debauchery. But in the middle, for the man who, however hard he struggles, can choose neither of those extremes, lay a form of salvation, another way of being chosen and achieving identity: the love of a woman.

As *Notes* approaches its climax, the reader is given a distressing instance of the right ideas coming from the wrong mouth. Waking from a drunken stupor beside the girl he has paid for and used, the narrator proceeds to persuade her that she must get out of the brothel at once. She is beautiful, she could have love and respect and marriage and children. Instead, what awaits her as a prostitute are contempt, disease, poverty, death by consumption. Using trite words that sound "as if from a book," he creates a heartbreaking picture that soon has the girl sobbing with regret. This is precisely the result he was aiming for. With no intention of helping, he has demonstrated his power to hurt, something he couldn't do with his less vulnerable friends. "It was the game, the game that fascinated me." But then he adds: "not just the game, however."

Here is the key to the whole book. Dostoyevsky is interested in the way ready-made visions adhere, or fail to adhere, or worst of all, half-adhere to the mind. The narrator plays a hideous trick on the young prostitute. But his "game" is only successful because he starts to believe in it. He is attracted to the girl. The hackneyed idea of saving a prostitute has got the better of him. His rhetoric becomes more convincing and dangerous. He gives her his address. Somebody is now in a position to step into his solipsistic world and make it real.

The denouement is as painful as it is farcical. Some days later the narrator is engaged in a comic argument with his servant when Lisa arrives. He is refusing to pay the servant his salary, trying to force him to recognize a relationship of subservience that goes beyond the exchange of cash. The servant is having none of it. He will only work if he is paid. Into the room steps the woman who has been selling herself for money, but is now asking for a recognition that goes beyond money. Terrified by this reality, the narrator tells her he was only fooling in the brothel. He breaks down in hysterics. Despite his disgraceful behavior, the girl responds to his suffering. She comforts him. She is offering love. He has been chosen. This is his moment, his chance to come out from the autism of the underground. But he is not equal to the responsibilities of reality. He has sex with the girl, then thrusts money into her hand and asks her to go. She rejects the money and leaves. Totally confused, he runs after her to beg forgiveness. "Never before had I endured so much suffering and repentance; but could there have been even the slightest doubt, as I went running out of the apartment, that I would turn back halfway?"

Dostoyevsky's feverish narrator is the original characterless character—the man who talks endlessly of himself because there is no self.

In any event, Lisa has gone. Without a self, the narrator is left with a few rubles in his hand and a mind doomed to raking back and forth across these moments for decades to come. In a conclusion that is distinctly Beckettian, he tells us he has had enough, he must stop his pointless reflections. In his authorial voice Dostoyevsky adds the postscript: "However, the 'notes' of this paradoxalist do not end here. He could not help himself and went on."

If the nineteenth century was the time when it became clear that any political future lay in the collective choice of the people, it naturally became necessary to discover who these people really were. This was the great task of the novel of the period. Yet the more the modern individual was losing, in the impersonal throng of the industrialized city, those traditional roles imposed by the old rural communal life, the more the suspicion arose that perhaps character was not so easily defined at all. Perhaps it was infinitely malleable. From the rented tenement rooms of the big European and American cities the most disturbing texts began to appear. In Berlin in 1845 Max Stirner wrote *The Ego and Its Own*, in which he argued that there was no need to be morally bound by old promises if you no longer wished to adhere to them, or rules if you didn't agree with them: The only thing that mattered was how much power you had to do as you wanted, now and now and now. In 1853 Melville invented a character who took a strange form of power by simply responding to every order and invitation with the refrain, "I would prefer not to." In 1868 the nadir of negativity was attained when Lautréamont published his *Chants de Maldoror*, which celebrates with utter complacency the atrocious crimes of a serial killer. Like *Notes From Underground*, the text is disconcerting for its juxtapositions of quite different styles, so that it becomes hard to discern a consistent identity behind the overall production. This was *Pulp Fiction* over a century before Tarantino.

But it was in the monologue Dostoyevsky created for *Notes From Underground* that the characterless character found his proper literary form, the man who talks endlessly of himself because there is no self, who imagines his listeners because he has none, internalizing the whole world and fantasizing impossible successes from the safety of complete non-engagement. Imitations, adaptations and ambitious developments of this voice produced some of the finest works of the twentieth century, from Céline to Beckett and Bernhard. But at the time *Notes* was written, few were impressed.

There is a reflection to be made here on a profound split in modern consciousness. To take on board the implications of *Notes From Underground* is to undermine any political debate predicated on the existence of people with stable selves who can make responsible decisions. Officially, such ideas must never be accepted. In reality, the amount of money spent pushing people from one camp to another with inane slogans and meaningless manifestoes suggests that the chosen ones who enjoy power know these facts all too well. In any event, we can take the date of the publication of *Notes* as the moment when ready-made visions and packaged ideals have been declared absolutely necessary, but only as a means of manipulation, or a form of mental comfort:

> I took comfort in that even then, and am of the same mind now. That is why we have so many 'broad natures' who even with the ultimate fall never lose their ideal; and though they wouldn't lift a finger for their ideal, though they are inveterate bandits and thieves, all the same they respect their original ideal to the point of tears and are remarkably honest in their souls.

If a world of idealists who are "remarkably honest in their souls" yet behave exactly as they choose is in any way recognizable to the modern reader, then the polarities that tense Dostoyevsky's narratives are still very much with us, even if the struggle against this state of affairs was long ago abandoned. ■

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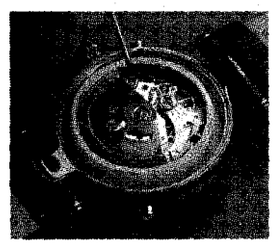

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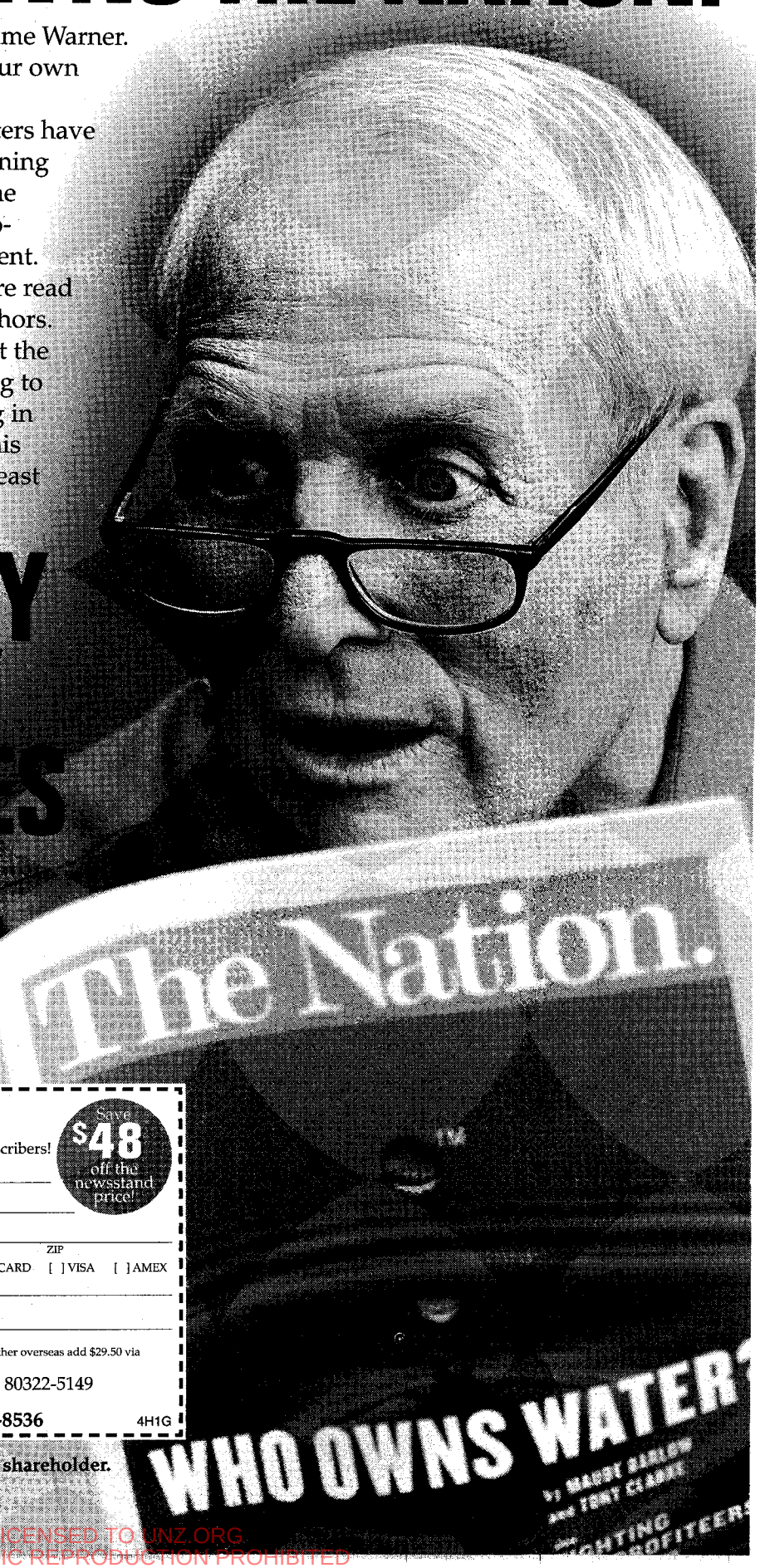

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Come Together

CRISTINA NEHRING

AFTER. By Claire Tristram. Farrar, Straus & Giroux. 194 pp. $20.

There's nothing like political disaster to turn soft porn into art. What would *Hiroshima, Mon Amour* be without Hiroshima? A film about a one-night-stand between a sullen actress and a slightly obsessive businessman. What would *The Night Porter* be without Nazi death camps as a backdrop? An S&M movie suitable for late-night video outlets. And what would Claire Tristram's new novel *After* be without September 11?

Touted as an "international sensation" and soon to appear in Italy, France, Holland, Sweden, Germany, Australia and England, the book tells the tale of an illicit affair—an affair with sadomasochistic overtones, an affair in a California motel. It resembles, in both its virtues and vices, the stories Tristram has been publishing for many years in *Best American Erotica* as well as on the Internet. There is her spare and suggestive prose style as well as her obsession with all things repulsive; there is acute attention to detail as well as an abundance of menstrual blood; there are "slack-jawed" lovers, sour endings, ritual cleansings and—always—a mismatched couple. What is different is that Tristram's first novel invokes the greatest political trauma of America's recent history, and weaves it self-consciously into its plot. It is this that lends her mildly titillating fiction the veneer of importance. It is the appropriation of national tragedy that has thrust this slender pornographic exercise between the covers of Farrar, Straus & Giroux. Opportunism has knocked—and Claire Tristram has answered.

She has answered with a story we recognize—that of the widow of Daniel Pearl, murdered by Islamic extremists because he was a Jew—and she has improvised upon it. The heroine of *After* is American, not French (as is Pearl's wife); she is also sexually ravenous. "Day by day," we learn,

> her grief had subtly changed its shape, until what was left was not quite grief at all, but something she could only describe as desire. She ate with her fingers. She slept naked. Grocery boys aroused her.

It is the staccato narration of such gritty detail that is Tristram's forte, and the reason we move through the first chapter with interest. It is only as the heroine announces her intention to take a Muslim lover and the novel starts to spiral into gratuitous sensationalism and pseudo-profound banality that we lose heart.

If we learn little of our heroine's reasons for seeking to bed a Muslim (forgiveness, revenge, curiosity, perversity?), we learn no more about how she perceives him once he is in her arms. "I didn't expect that you would be circumcised," she says in one of her more meditative moments. He enlightens her on that account—but on few others. Indeed, it is she who instructs him of his identity: "You are my first...Muslim," she declares. When he objects that he is secular, not even Arab but Persian, and asks that they treat one another as individuals rather than members of a "particular category," she rebukes him in terms as harsh as they are pietistic:

> When those men asked my husband if he was a Jew, he said, "Yes I am a Jew." He didn't say "No, I'm an individual."... Individuals are all the same, you know. Cut off from what they are. They are nothing at all.... My husband...gave up everything to acknowledge who he was. You are a Muslim. I am the widow of a Jew. That is who I am.... I wonder, could you do that? Give up everything, your family, your life, just for once to be completely what you are?

It is hard not to think that Tristram actually believes this inanity; she gives it all the authority of a widow's pain, all the axiomatic eloquence of a sage. Later in the novel she has the widow's lover docilely repeat "I am a Muslim," as though finally admitting his deepest identity. All of this essentialism might be disturbing were Tristram not simply passing the time between sex scenes.

Sex is the point of this tale—not philosophy or politics—and sex is what we get. "Extreme" sex, as in Tristram's previous work: wire hangers used as handcuffs, anal penetration, full-body shaves, blindfolds, drawn blood, sex role reversals, the ever-smoldering threat of violence. But even in the wake of Abu Ghraib, the strenuous transgressiveness in this book seems oddly...idle. From moment to moment, the heroine does not know what she will do next—and neither, we sense, does the author. Should she make the Persian man phone his wife, or should she whip him with the coat hanger; should she slip out of the hotel room and abandon him, dress up in his pant suits, shave his body like an Islamic martyr, slit his throat or ask him to marry her? Tragically intense as she is intended to appear, the widow in fact resembles a bored channel surfer. Shall she turn on the bloody murder mystery, she wonders, or the quiz show; a Merce Cunningham ballet, that scene with the hijackers or *My Big Fat Greek Wedding*? In the end she just toys with the remote. And Tristram toys with us.

But if *After* says little about the world after September 11, less about being a Muslim or Jew, and nothing whatever of pressing policy issues, it just might suggest something about eros. Together with other nominally political erotica like Marguerite Duras's *Hiroshima, Mon Amour* and Bernardo Bertolucci's *Last Tango in Paris* (both of which it insistently echoes), as well as Bernhard Schlink's recent novel *The Reader* and Bertolucci's latest film *The Dreamers*—it suggests that we are viscerally drawn to our antagonist. None of these tales are about politics nearly so much as about our attraction to the Forbidden, the Other, the Unfamiliar, even the Adversary. In fact, it barely matters whether the lovers portrayed in these fictions are divided by politics, class, age or religion—whether they consist of a French girl and an enemy German soldier in *Hiroshima*, a shady American and a pampered Parisienne in *Last Tango*, a 15-year-old whiz kid and a 30-year-old tram conductor who turns out to be a Nazi in *The Reader*, or a Muslim and the victim of Muslims in *After*—what matters is that the lovers are divided; that they are remote from each other, prohibited to each other, alien.

We are accustomed to viewing this sort of attraction—the forbidden-fruit brand—as negative, shallow, feckless and even dangerous: It makes people have affairs with other folks' husbands; it makes presidents succumb to interns, and students romance their professors. But perhaps there is another way to view it, especially in the context evoked by *After*, *Hiroshima, Mon Amour* and *The Reader*.

Perhaps we can view this attraction as nature, for once, overcoming the competi-

Cristina Nehring is working on a book on women and love for HarperCollins. Her essays appear in The Atlantic Monthly, Harper's, *the* London Review of Books *and other publications. She lives in Paris and Los Angeles.*

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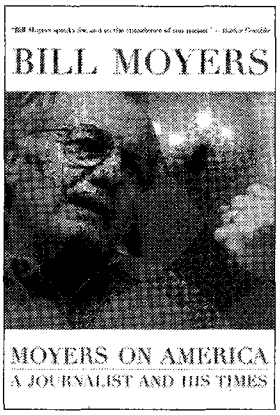

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tions and hatreds and fears foisted upon us by society, and bringing warring, pouting, fearing, or simply irreconcilably "diverse" persons together. Perhaps nature is more—rather than less—moral than culture in this instance. Culture drives us to pursue our self-interest, to befriend those people most like ourselves and best able to aid, echo and promote us; nature nudges us to embrace the impractical, the strange, indeed, sometimes the hostile. It urges us to reach across boundaries, to "sleep with the enemy."

Half the reason, it is tempting to think, for the near-universal incest taboo is the fact that in love—unlike in friendship, work or regional politics—we dread someone like ourselves; we dread our "twin," our "cousin." We want the sister of the chieftain next door, not our own! It is the exotic, not the familiar, we crave. If, in sunlit social life, we choose co-workers, lunch guests, neighbors and even (as has often been remarked) house pets that resemble us, in the darkened corners of erotic fantasy, we very often choose the Other. Is this, then, such an ungenerous instinct?

Even the heroine of *After*, ill-developed as she is, feels closer to a sizable part of humanity after her encounter with the man she elects to view as Muslim. It is hard to think that a few illicit love affairs between Israelis and Palestinians, Iraqis and Americans, would not do more for the strained relations between these peoples than another speech by Ariel Sharon or President Bush. The point here is not: Make love not war. Or maybe it is—but in this case "make love" must be seized in its widest sense—not as the silly acrobatics performed by the characters in Tristram's novel but as the engagement with difference, the fascination with opposition that we all feel and only need to cultivate and translate into wider languages. If reading Tristram's book could prompt such impulses—and only then—it would be well worth the hype. ■

How the Other Half Votes

GEORGE SCIALABBA

WHAT'S THE MATTER WITH KANSAS? How Conservatives Won the Heart of America.
By Thomas Frank. Metropolitan. 306 pp. $24.

For years the battle raged across my family's kitchen table. My second-generation, inner-city, working-class parents complained angrily about welfare fraud, affirmative action, the coddling of criminals, too-welcoming immigration policies and overly generous foreign aid, while honest, hard-working Americans like themselves, "born in this country," couldn't get a break. My older brother sometimes joined them but mostly sat back and enjoyed my exasperation as I, the college boy, insisted shrilly but unpersuasively that all their anecdotes were just exceptions, that liberal policies were essentially fair and rational, and that instead of blaming the unfortunate they should make common cause with other little people against the rich, who, for some reason, were completely off their radar screen. Fortunately, the habits of a lifetime kept them from ever voting Republican. But what Thomas Frank calls "the Great Backlash" had won their hearts.

The central electoral phenomenon of the past thirty-five years has been the movement of working-class and lower-middle-class voters from the Democratic to the Republican Party. Some were Nixon Democrats, who supported the Vietnam War or were outraged by its more flamboyant opponents. Some were Wallace Democrats, who objected to busing or affirmative action and resented the pointy-headed judges and bureaucrats who imposed them. Some were Reagan Democrats, who wanted to feel good again after Jimmy Carter informed them of their malaise. Some were antiabortion Democrats, mobilized after *Roe v. Wade* by a newly assertive Catholic and evangelical Protestant leadership, or anti-Hollywood Democrats, offended by television's reflection of changed attitudes to sex and authority. All had once felt a traditional allegiance to the party of FDR and the New Deal, which had been their charter of inclusion in American prosperity. No longer.

Instead, they now vote for the party that has engineered their exclusion. Real wages in the United States are roughly the same now as they were in 1980; fewer jobs pro-

George Scialabba writes about books for the Boston Globe, *the* Boston Review *and elsewhere.*

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vide adequate health or retirement benefits; the percentage of working people protected by unions has declined precipitously; unemployment benefits are less generous; and the federal government's finances are so gravely impaired that Social Security and Medicare benefits may well be reduced and/or delayed, beginning with the next generation of retirees. At the same time, financial profits and the income of the richest Americans have increased dramatically. That most of the blame for all this can be laid at the door of Republican tax, labor, regulatory, agricultural, antitrust and trade policies has not shaken the allegiance of these working-class and lower-middle-class Republicans. It is, for some reason, completely off their radar screen.

The apparent blindness of the backlashers to their self-victimization has long made many of us crazy. Tom Frank has gone home to get to the bottom of it. Instead of shouting futilely across the kitchen table, he has turned his quarrel with his home state into a brilliant book, one of the best so far this decade on American politics.

Kansas has a radical past, Frank tells us. It was first settled by Free Soilers, supported by New England abolitionists, to prevent slavery spreading west from Missouri. Later in the century the Populist movement flourished in Kansas, sweeping elections statewide. One US senator whom they voted out of office complained that "for a generation, Kansas has been the testing-ground for every experiment in morals, politics, and social life." A classic political essay ridiculing the Populists, "What's the Matter with Kansas?", gave Frank his title. Even after Populism's defeat, Kansas kept the faith: The famous Socialist newspaper *Appeal to Reason* was published there.

A century later Kansans are still raising hell. But they've given up fighting the "money power" that obsessed their Populist and Socialist forebears. Now they're fighting for the money power. The descendants of the Eastern bankers and tycoons who drove nineteenth-century farmers, artisans and shopkeepers off the land or into bankruptcy are ConAgra, Boeing and Wal-Mart, who are turning farmers into virtual sharecroppers, eliminating union jobs and laying waste the small-town culture that conservatives claim to cherish. But they are doing this without a peep of protest from the fired-up grassroots activists who have taken over the Kansas Republican Party. On the contrary: Populist radicalism in Kansas today, though its causes are moral and religious, is fervently antigovernment and pro–free market, even as market forces devastate Kansas's social and economic landscape.

In 1991 the national pro-life movement staged a summer of civil disobedience in Wichita. Successful beyond expectations, it launched the religious right into Kansas politics. Their long march through the state Republican machine, against the startled and increasingly bitter opposition of the moderate establishment, is the central thread of *What's the Matter with Kansas?* Frank follows their contest through sermons, pamphlets, websites, diligent trawling of the Wichita, Topeka, and Kansas City press, and, most engagingly, many interviews. Indeed, much of the book is given over to Frank's respectful, bemused portrayal of these righteous rebels. Some are opportunists, steering their political careers before the prevailing ideological wind. (Senator Sam Brownback, for example, though undoubtedly pious, seems also to have a remarkable eye for the main chance.) Some are crackpots, like the ultra-ultra-orthodox Catholic man in a farmhouse on the prairie, elected Pope by his five followers. Most are earnest, thoughtful, unselfish and hardworking.

To none of them, however, does it ever seem to occur that untrammeled capitalism may not ultimately be conducive to godliness, tradition and community. Family farms and the small towns they supported disappear into the maw of Archer Daniels Midland, thanks to Republican-authored agricultural deregulation. Tyson and Cargill build vast feedlots and slaughterhouses in western Kansas, staffed by low-wage immigrants with few benefits and comparatively free of pesky meat inspectors and occupational-safety monitors, thanks to Republican-imposed budget-cutting and anti-union policies. Boeing, the largest employer in Wichita, threatens to move, so the state legislature votes the company a $500 million interest-free bond issue, despite the worst budget shortfall in Kansas history and with predictable effects on teacher salaries—all this thanks to Republican (and Democratic) free-trade policies.

But none of this shakes the grassroots rebels' devotion to the free market. "Out here," Frank observes incredulously, "the gravity of discontent pulls in only one direction: to the right, to the right, farther to the right. Strip today's Kansans of their job security, and they head out to become registered Republicans. Push them off their land, and next thing you know they're

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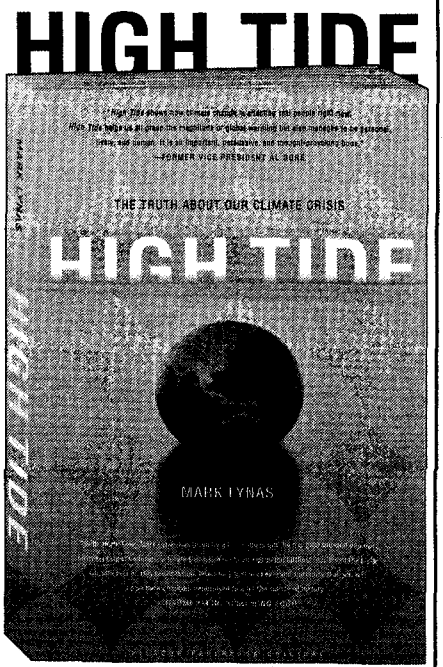

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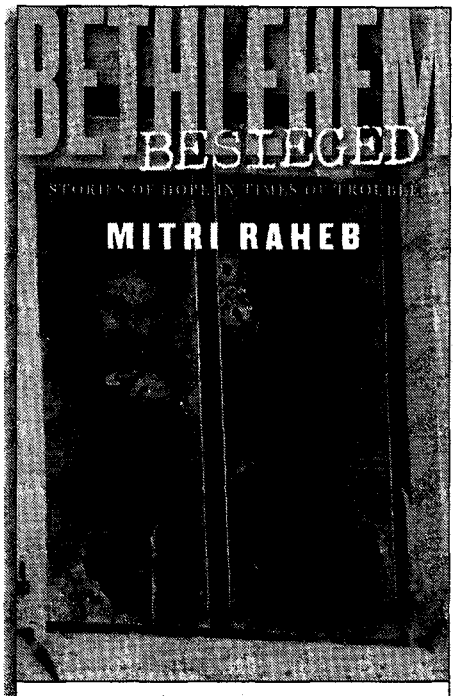

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Why, we liberals splutter, this amazing obtuseness? What's the matter with these Kansans? A non-rich Republican is already a puzzle; and surely these noisy champions of stability and other old-fashioned values can't help noticing that what laissez-faire means, at least for little people, is that everything solid melts into air? Why haven't they stayed and taken over the Democratic Party, where they belong, or at least thrown the plutocrats out of the Republican Party, leaving them to wander in the political wilderness where they belong?

The answer, apparently, is anti-intellectualism. Grassroots conservatives have convinced themselves—with a great deal of help from what David Brock's important new book calls "the Republican Noise Machine"—that secular intellectuals form a class (yes, the fabled "New Class") with designs on state power and popular liberties. The ravages of the market, in this view, are a misfortune, a kind of natural disaster; but the impositions of state power are potentially something worse: a tyranny. Making money is natural, therefore innocent; thinking is artificial, therefore dangerous. A Great Depression is natural and self-limiting; a New Deal is artificial and self-expanding. No doubt the tremendous residual power of anticommunism in the American mind helps explain this prejudice, for although the New Class theory finds practically no support in American history, where the state has nearly always been thoroughly subordinate to business, it does find considerable support in the dire history of Leninism, which was, after all, a tyranny of intellectuals.

A war against the "money power" is a class war; a war against intellectuals is a culture war. Frank's dissection of the contemporary culture war—of the indefatigable insistence of backlashers and the hucksters who claim to represent them that the government take action against abortion and the teaching of evolution, against gay marriage and gangsta rap, against pornography and Robert Mapplethorpe, but never against predatory corporations or on behalf of their victims—is superb, the best since Barbara Ehrenreich's *Fear of Falling* (1989). And his prose, as many have noted, descends from Mencken's:

> The trick never ages; the illusion never wears off. *Vote* to stop abortion; *receive* a rollback in capital gains taxes. *Vote* to make our country strong again; *receive* deindustrialization. *Vote* to screw those politically correct college professors; *receive* electricity deregulation. *Vote* to get government off our backs; *receive* conglomeration and monopoly everywhere from media to meat-packing. *Vote* to stand tall against terrorists; *receive* Social Security privatization. *Vote* to strike a blow against elitism; *receive* a social order in which wealth is more concentrated than ever before in our lifetimes, in which workers have been stripped of power and CEOs are rewarded in a manner beyond imagining.

Who or what is to blame? Is this purely a scam, or does it also show up a failure of our democracy? Clearly, the legions of the backlash are being duped. They have no reason to ally with the business party, where, as Frank says, their "cultural anger is marshaled to achieve economic ends." But just as clearly, their anger deserves to have democratic expression, even effect. Cosmopolitan *Nation* readers may consider them benighted, even bigoted, but surely the poor sods should be able to wage culture war if they want to without screwing themselves (along with the rest of us) economically.

Our two-party system makes this difficult, though. If backlashers shed their free-market delusions and became economic populists, they would no longer be welcome in the Republican Party. But would they, as cultural conservatives, be welcome in the Democratic Party? And if they made themselves welcome, even became a majority, where would cultural liberals go? The fact is, a polity with more than one vital, contentious and persistent issue may not be well served by a two-party, winner-take-all electoral system. Liberals learned this recently (at any rate those liberals who did not stop with blaming Nader). Conservatives may learn it soon.

For all its ruinous consequences, the right-wing culture war can at least claim the merit of having called forth that peerless magazine *The Baffler*, the *Baffler* anthologies, Thomas Frank's previous books, and this book. *What's the Matter With Kansas?* should at last make Frank a national figure. That would go some way, perhaps, toward redeeming the intellectual honor of a country that has lionized David Brooks and tolerated Ann Coulter. ■

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Philosophical Convictions

RICHARD RORTY

THE SEDUCTION OF UNREASON: The Intellectual Romance With Fascism From Nietzsche to Postmodernism. By Richard Wolin. Princeton. 375 pp. $29.95.

Philosophers get attention only when they appear to be doing something sinister—corrupting the youth, undermining the foundations of civilization, sneering at all we hold dear. The rest of the time everybody assumes that they are hard at work somewhere down in the sub-basement, keeping those foundations in good repair. Nobody much cares what brand of intellectual duct tape is being used.

The public becomes incensed, however, when rogue philosophers come upstairs, buttonhole the tenants and tell them that there really are no foundations—that their industrious colleagues are just providing "bad reasons for what we believe upon instinct" (F.H. Bradley's description of metaphysics). Every anti-foundationalist movement within philosophy produces a spate of books by nonphilosophers denouncing "the treason of the intellectuals" (the title of Julien Benda's 1927 attack on the pernicious influence of thinkers such as Henri Bergson and William James).

Books about this sort of treason have proliferated in the United States and Britain in the past decade. This is because post-Nietzschean European philosophy has become increasingly popular in the English-speaking world. No graduate student in literature, history or political theory in an American or British university can afford to be ignorant of Foucault. For a time, deconstructing texts—that is, trying to sound as much like Derrida as possible while not actually engaging with any philosophical issues—was all the rage in the literature departments. Deconstruction is no longer in fashion, but Derrida is still, deservedly, admired.

These two original and influential French thinkers agree that Nietzsche was right to reject Plato's attempt to demonstrate rationally that some moral and political values are better grounded in the nature of things than others. When Derrida and Foucault were students, they assimilated and accepted Martin Heidegger's story about how Western philosophy began with Plato and ended with Nietzsche. They were convinced by Heidegger's books that we should stop trying to "ground" Western institutions in something august and ahistorical. They regretted both the "superman" passages in Nietzsche—the ones that the Nazis made such good use of—and Heidegger's admiration for Hitler. But these regrets did not diminish their admiration for the two men's philosophical achievements.

Richard Wolin thinks that it is not as easy as all that to separate the conduct of a philosopher from the utility of his ideas, or his moral character from his teachings. A distinguished intellectual historian who teaches at the Graduate Center of the City University of New York, Wolin believes that the prevalence of "slack postmodernist relativism" is very dangerous. "The postmodern left," he says, "risks depriving democracy of valuable normative resources at an hour of extreme historical need." His book seeks to demonstrate that "at a certain point postmodernism's hostility towards 'reason' and 'truth' is intellectually untenable and politically debilitating." Many of the essays that make up the book focus on the dubious—and sometimes appalling—political stances adopted by eminent post-Nietzschean thinkers. Wolin argues that their political attitudes are closely bound up with their anti-foundationalist philosophical views.

Wolin has an easy time showing that fans of Nietzsche and Heidegger have said stupid and irresponsible things about democracy. But he does not do much to show that the stupidities follow from their philosophies, nor that those philosophies are untenable. To do the latter, he would have to argue in defense of specific philosophical claims—those that constitute what he thinks of as democracy's "normative resources." He leaves it pretty vague what a "normative resource" might be, and how such resources are put to use in political deliberation.

Postmodernism, Wolin says, is "the rejection of the intellectual and cultural assumptions of modernity in the name of 'will to power' (Nietzsche), 'sovereignty' (Bataille), an 'other beginning' (Heidegger), 'différance' (Derrida) or a 'different economy of bodies and pleasures' (Foucault)." So one expects him to enumerate "the intellectual and cultural assumptions of modernity" and show why they should not be rejected. But Wolin seems to assume that his readers already know what these assumptions are, and are disposed to take rejection of them as a *reductio ad absurdum* of a philosopher's outlook.

Sometimes, however, he goes out on a philosophical limb, as when he says that Derrida's "criticism of the modern natural law tradition—the normative basis of the contemporary democratic societies"—leaves us with a "'political existentialism,' in which, given the 'groundless' nature of moral and political choice, one political 'decision' seems almost as good as another." In such passages as these, Wolin endorses the old Platonic argument to the effect that if there is nothing "out there" (the Platonic forms, the will of God, natural law) that makes our moral judgments true, there is no point in forming such judgments at all.

Plato argued along the following lines: Truth is a matter of correspondence to reality. Propositions are made true by things that are as they are, independent of human desires and decisions. This goes for propositions like "Kindness is better than cruelty" as much as for those like "Annapurna is west of Everest." Relations of moral preferability are no more up to us to decide than are spatial relations between mountains. The claim about kindness is as obviously true as the one about Annapurna, and so there must be something out there (something metaphysical, something that philosophers know more about than most people) that makes it true. If you deny that there is anything like that, the Platonist argument goes, you are denying that there is a rational way to choose between Athens and Sparta (or, as we moderns would say, between Social Democrats and Nazis). To agree with Protagoras and Nietzsche that "man is the measure of all things" is, Wolin thinks, to reduce the choice of democracy over fascism to a matter of taste.

The most dubious premise in this argument is the one that says that truth is correspondence to reality. As everybody who has ever taken a philosophy class knows, it is hard to specify what the correspondence relation is supposed to be. What, for ex-

Richard Rorty, a professor of comparative literature and philosophy at Stanford University, is the author of numerous books, including Philosophy and the Mirror of Nature *(Princeton);* Contingency, Irony and Solidarity *(Cambridge); and* Philosophy and Social Hope *(Penguin).*

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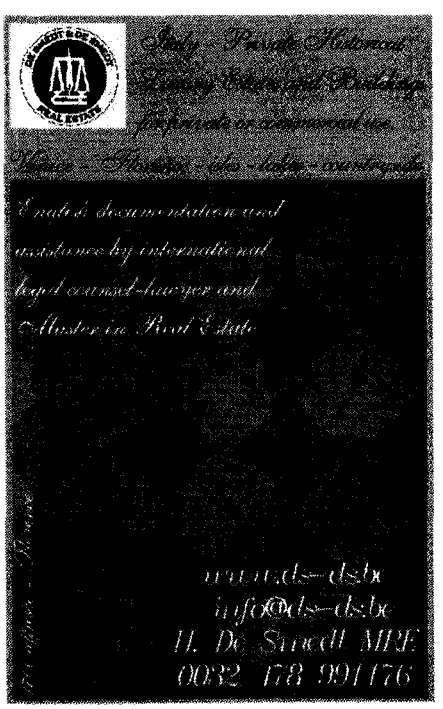

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ample, does "There are no unicorns" correspond to? What entities make "There are infinitely many transfinite cardinal numbers" true? If you do not believe in the mysterious things that Plato called "the Forms," what exactly is it that you think moral truths are made true by? And anyway, why are claims about the existence of truth-makers such as the Forms, or "natural law," supposed to be more evidently true than the intuitive moral judgments they are used to ground? Could we ever become more convinced of the truth of a metaphysical theory than we already are of the truth of those judgments?

Most students emerge from the philosophy courses in which such questions as these are debated with their instinctive Platonism intact, just as most Christians retain their religious convictions after having read Hume's *Dialogues* on natural religion. But those who have been plunged into doubt frequently turn to Nietzsche or Heidegger, hoping to find out how things look after you give up the correspondence theory of truth. They could accomplish the same purpose by turning to William James or John Dewey. But the American pragmatists lack pizazz. Strident and scornful anti-Platonists like Nietzsche attract more readers than jocular and easygoing ones like James. Heidegger's apocalyptic-sounding announcements of "the end of philosophy" sound more impressive than Dewey's mild-mannered suggestions that philosophy should be less ambitious and less pretentious than in the past.

Nietzsche and Heidegger thought that once one rejected the Platonic claim to provide rational foundations for moral truth, all things would need to be made new. Culture would have to be reshaped. James and Dewey, by contrast, did not think that giving up the correspondence theory of truth was all that big a deal. They wanted to debunk it, and so help get rid of Platonist rationalism, but they did not think that doing so would make that much difference to our self-image or to our social practices. The superstructure, they thought, would still be in good shape even after we stopped worrying about the state of the foundations. Democracy could be adequately defended by empirical, nonmetaphysical arguments of the sort Churchill offered when he said that it was "the worst form of Government except all those other forms that have been tried from time to time." It did not need "normative resources."

Wolin does not discuss whether James and Dewey might have been right when they urged that democracy and modernity could get along nicely without any philosophical foundations, and that the thing to do with metaphysics was to mock it, rather than refurbish or refute it. Wolin views Enlightenment politics as inseparable from Enlightenment rationalism, whereas James and Dewey did their best to keep the one while discarding the other.

Wolin is at his best when he deals with the proponents of anti-foundationalist arguments rather than with the arguments themselves. He is more interested in what kinds of people they were, and in which political movements made use of them, than in what they said in defense of their paradoxical-sounding claims about reason and truth. Much of his book tell us of the bad behavior of such men as Carl Jung, Hans-Georg Gadamer, Maurice Blanchot and Georges Bataille. He frequently says such things as that "Gadamer's wartime conduct cannot help but raise critical questions about his philosophy and its relationship to its times." But he rarely follows through by explaining just why one cannot peel off a certain philosopher's conduct from his opinions. He seems to think that any thinker who has displayed either hypocrisy or self-deception is unlikely to have any ideas worth adopting.

Wolin is very good at digging up the dirt on famous European thinkers. He does a fine job of describing how their doctrines were put to use by different bad guys at different times—how, for example, "a critique of reason, democracy and humanism that originated on the German Right during the 1920s was internalized by the French Left." That is an admirable summary of one of the strangest turns in twentieth-century European intellectual life. But, though he protests that his book is "not an exercise in guilt-by-association," that description is actually pretty close to the mark. Wolin neglects the question of why the figures he discusses held the views they did in favor of an account of the uses to which they were put.

Wolin thinks, rightly, that if you understand the sociopolitical contexts in which a philosophical view was formulated, and the factors that account for its reception, you will be in a better position to decide whether to adopt it. Still, the best sort of intellectual history is the kind that pays equal attention to the company a philosophical doctrine keeps and to the arguments deployed in its defense. One book that does just that, and that treats of the same figures as Wolin's, is Jürgen Habermas's magisterial *The Philosophical Discourse of Moder-*

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nity. Wolin's polemic against postmodernism is spirited and informative, and his heart is in the right place. But though Habermas shares Wolin's doubts about postmodernism and his sympathies with traditional rationalism, his book does something Wolin's does not: It helps one understand *why* most of the important philosophers of the twentieth century grew skeptical about foundation-building and foundation-repairing projects. Readers who are stimulated, but puzzled, by Wolin's account of the matter would do well to go on to Habermas's. ■

Cutting Remarks

CLAIRE DEDERER

SCUM MANIFESTO. By Valerie Solanas. Verso. 80 pp. $15.

In 1966 Valerie Solanas moved to New York City. At 30, she was already a woman with a difficult past. Growing up in New Jersey, she was molested by her father. She attended college at the University of Maryland, then did a year of grad school in the psychology department of the University of Minnesota. She worked as a prostitute either during or after college, according to different accounts. Once ensconced in Greenwich Village, Solanas wrote an absurdist and quite filthy play titled *Up Your Ass*. Then, sometime in early 1967, she wrote the book that would change her life: the *SCUM Manifesto*.

"SCUM" stood for Society for Cutting Up Men. The Manifesto is a call to rid the planet of men. It opens with this sentence: "Life in this society being, at best, an utter bore and no aspect of society being at all relevant to women, there remains to civic-minded, responsible, thrill-seeking females only to overthrow the government, eliminate the money system, institute complete automation and destroy the male sex." Get rid of money, work and men, and you'd have a society fit to live in.

According to Solanas, men suffer from "pussy envy." They are the passive members of the race. "He hates his passivity, so he projects it onto women." In his attempt to compensate for his inadequacy, Solanas's man dominates the family, the workplace and, through his warmaking, the world. (Not a bad analysis of Bush's America.) "No genuine social revolution can be accomplished by the male," she writes, "as the male on top wants the status quo, and all the male on the bottom wants is to be the male on top.... The male changes only when forced to do so by technology, when he has no choice, when 'society' reaches the stage where he must change or die. We're at that stage now; if women don't get their asses in gear fast, we may very well all die."

Getting your ass in gear means getting rid of the men. Not all women can be trusted with this charge; only SCUM—"hateful, violent bitches given to slamming those who unduly irritate them in the teeth"—are up to the task. (There were, in fact, no other members of SCUM. Solanas later described SCUM as a kind of "literary device.") The leap from social critique to a six-inch blade is breathtaking. The manifesto whipsaws you. One moment you're nodding along with her rage, the next you're wondering "How did we end up here?" as she talks about ramming ice picks up assholes.

Solanas mimeographed her manifesto and sold it on the streets. (In Mary Harron's scrupulously researched 1996 film *I Shot Andy Warhol*, we see her charging women a quarter and men 50 cents.) Around the same time, Solanas stormed the gates of the Factory to present a copy of *Up Your Ass* to Andy Warhol, who refused to produce it. He did, however, let her hang around the Factory for a time, and cast her as a lesbian in his film *I, a Man*. Solanas, a budding paranoid, hounded him about the play and grew anxious about his possession of the script.

Solanas continued to hit the streets, peddling her manifesto, her body or even an hour of lively conversation, for which she charged just $6. By chance, on some New York sidewalk, she met Olympia Press chief Maurice Girodias, the legendary maverick who published Nabokov, Burroughs and Miller. He signed her up to write a book. Solanas was thrilled by her status as a soon-to-be-published writer, but it wasn't long before she began obsessing about the seemingly restrictive legal boilerplate of Girodias's contract.

On June 3, 1968, Solanas stopped by Girodias's office or his room at the Chelsea Hotel, depending on the source. She carried a gun in a paper bag. Girodias was out that day, so she proceeded to the Factory. There she shot Warhol in the chest three times. (And the art critic Mario Amayo as well—no one ever seems to remember the poor guy.) She aimed the gun next at Warhol's manager, Fred Hughes, who uttered a line that could have been lifted from one of Warhol's deadpan films: "Oh, there's the elevator. Why don't you get on, Valerie?" She did. That evening, she turned herself in.

Warhol survived, and Solanas went to jail for three years. In the 1970s, she was in and out of psychiatric wards. In the 1980s, she continued to live a marginal life, nursing a drug problem and supporting herself with prostitution. She died of emphysema and pneumonia in 1988, either in a hotel in San Francisco's Tenderloin district or in a welfare hospital, again depending on the source.

The *SCUM Manifesto*, on the other hand, went on to bigger and better things. In 1968 Girodias published it with a commentary by *Realist* publisher Paul Krassner. Feminist-movement leaders like Florynce Kennedy, Ti-Grace Atkinson and Robin Morgan hailed Solanas as an important new voice. In 1970 Morgan included the *Manifesto* in her influential anthology *Sisterhood Is Powerful*. Girodias published it twice more, in 1970 and 1971. In 1977 Solanas, freaked out by minor edits made by Girodias, self-published "the CORRECT Valerie Solanas edition." In 1983 the Matriarchy Study Group in London brought it out, and it was published a few more times by small presses throughout the 1990s. (San Francisco–based AK Press put out an edition in 1996 with a terrific afterword by the artist Freddie Baer, from which much of the biographical information in this article is taken.)

Now Verso has published a top-of-the-line, sexy new edition, begging the question: Why the *SCUM Manifesto*, now? Possibly because Solanas's crazed rage doesn't look so crazed anymore. These days, SCUM is no longer scummy. SCUM is transgressive, queer, other-identified. SCUM has its own learned journals, its own coffeehouses, its own university departments, its own bands and movies. The cultural critic B. Ruby Rich noted Solanas's burgeoning relevance in her 1993 essay "Manifesto Destiny," which ran in the *Voice*

Claire Dederer, who lives in Seattle, writes frequently for the New York Times Book Review.

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Literary Supplement. "The 90s is the decade of the Riot Grrrls, the Lesbian Avengers, Thelma and Louise, the Aileen Wuornos case, and Lorena Bobbitt," she wrote. "There's something intensely contemporary about Solanas, not just in her act but in her text as well."

Was Solanas a harbinger, even an early cause, of this flowering of female rage and queer empowerment? Does she merit some kind of elevated status as the mother of transgression? Verso's gorgeous new edition seems to answer yes. The slim, hardbound volume, with its elegant matte black cover, lends her manifesto a canonical gravitas. She's given the full theory treatment in an introduction by Avital Ronell, a professor of German and comparative literature at New York University whose previous academic titles include *Crack Wars* and *Stupidity*. Even the typeface is beautifully designed. Verso's *SCUM Manifesto* is a chic little object.

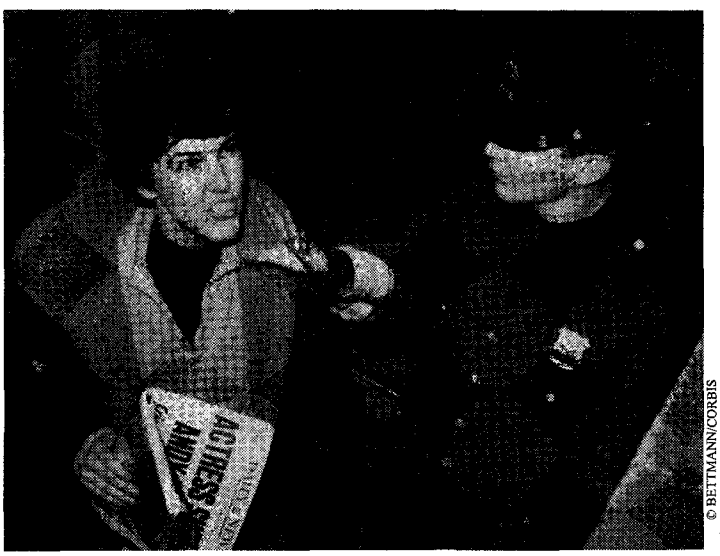
At her arraignment for the Warhol shootings, a clamoring pack of reporters surrounded Solanas. "Read my manifesto," she said to the crowd. "It will tell you who I am." Her words eerily conjure the problem for those of us intrigued by Solanas. Does the manifesto justify the shooting? Or does the shooting vindicate the manuscript? Is *she* the manifesto? Or is she the shooting? Text or action? Word or woman?

Of course, we'll never be able to answer these questions, because we can never encounter the manifesto without the shooting. We would probably still read *Ariel* and *The Bell Jar* if Sylvia Plath had not killed herself, but would they mean the same thing? We can never know.

The Plath connection is hardly coincidental. A question nagged at me as I read the *SCUM Manifesto*: What if Sylvia Plath had shot Ted Hughes instead of gassing herself? How would we read her work? Would we still dream of her as a beautiful woman? In the 2003 biopic, Plath was played by the radiant Gwyneth Paltrow. Solanas, on the other hand, was portrayed in *I Shot Andy Warhol* by Lili Taylor, an actress who has played ugly in many films. (I ran into Taylor once at the Mallory Hotel in Portland, Oregon, and she was heart-stoppingly beautiful in real life. But that's another essay.)

Plath's suicide and Solanas's attempted murder of Warhol might be considered the two major acts of feminist violence of the 1960s. Plath and Solanas can be seen as representing two aspects of the movement. On the one hand, women were trying to articulate their unhappiness and their madness in a male-dominated society. They talked, soul-searched, bore witness. They wrote memoirs and met in consciousness-raising groups. Plath's writing predates this discourse, but belongs firmly in it.

Memoir and consciousness-raising were not for Solanas. It wasn't just that she came along too early for consciousness-raising. You feel pretty sure she would have detested it, had she ever met it. She believed in action. "SCUM is too impatient to wait for the de-brainwashing of millions of assholes." The *SCUM Manifesto* is a kind of anti-memoir. Instead of focusing inward on her own feelings and experiences, Solanas looked outward at the world and demanded action. She had a theory and a plan. Men were ruining the world, and must be gotten rid of. "SCUM is impatient," she wrote. "SCUM wants to grab some thrilling living for itself."



Valerie Solanas, as she is escorted into police headquarters, June 4, 1968

But Solanas couldn't entirely escape memoir. Her description of the women who are proudly SCUM is imbued with a carnal knowledge. "[F]unky, dirty, low-down SCUM gets around...and around and around...they've seen the whole show—every bit of it—the fucking scene, the dyke scene—they've covered the whole waterfront, been under every dock and pier—the peter pier, the pussy pier...." B. Ruby Rich, quoting the same passage, pointed out that this is a species of autobiography: "Of course," wrote Rich, "'they' in this story can only be 'I,' since there were no other members of SCUM. It's as close to confessional as the *Manifesto* ever gets."

Solanas imagined her SCUM sisters as a fierce tribe of vibrantly imagined *ur*-women: "dominant, secure, self-confident, nasty, violent, selfish, independent, proud, thrill-seeking, free-wheeling, arrogant females, who consider themselves fit to rule the universe, who have free-wheeled to the limits of this 'society' and are ready to wheel on to something far beyond what it has to offer." To me this is the most painful and beautiful moment of the *Manifesto*. You picture beer halls and fistfights, wet kisses and joy rides. But Solanas, as far as we know, wasn't a member of some utopian girl gang. She was evasive even on the topic of her lesbianism. She had no SCUM sisters. She was alone. In her introduction, Ronnell rightly situates Solanas alongside David Koresh and Ted Kaczynski, a trio of revolutionaries "unmoored and alone with their inscriptions."

A manifesto needs a goal, a green pasture where you'll presumably go when all your revolutionary acts are discharged. Solanas's goal was an intimate fantasy of female comradeship. Her green pasture was filled with freewheeling women. In the meantime, her happiness was made safely impossible by the unmanageable scope of her revolution. Solanas is saying she'll be happy personally after her political needs are met. Since this can never happen, she's perfectly justified in her misery and loneliness.

In a sense, Solanas's manifesto is an expression of powerlessness. Her revolution is so huge that it can never begin. True, she did shoot a man, but even that seemingly militant act was marbled with vulnerability and unsureness. In the *Manifesto*, Solanas was the decisive woman who attacked silently, ruthlessly, in the dark. Her real-life shooting lacked a basic unifying intention. It was a flailing. She went to Girodias's office to shoot him, found he was out that day, so shot Warhol instead. (And the art critic.)

The *SCUM Manifesto* is a document of profound vulnerability, written in a voice of profound empowerment. It's a brutal call to arms, written by a woman in a world of hurt. This tension between powerlessness and power makes it an enduring piece of writing. Never have the personal and the political been so mercilessly zipped together, like little steel teeth. ■

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Grapes of Wrath

MATTHEW DEBORD

NOBLE ROT: A Bordeaux Wine Revolution. By William Echikson. Norton. 302 pp. $24.95.

THE ACCIDENTAL CONNOISSEUR: An Irreverent Journey Through the Wine World. By Lawrence Osborne. North Point. 262 pp. $24.

Several years ago, I did some reporting for a story that I wanted to write about wine and how it's advertised. I was interested in whether the wine industry would be able to reach the younger drinkers it ritually pledges to woo away from beer and liquor, so I lined up an interview with the head of an agency that had done some work for a French winemaker. He was completely no-nonsense about what the vast majority of wine drinkers are all about. Their two key concerns, he explained matter-of-factly, were to find something that tastes good and not get ripped off.

Neither of these books is written for the tastes-good, don't-rip-me-off crowd. But they've arrived at a critical time for the wine business. Depending on whom you talk to, things are either great or grim. If you consider wine to be the final redoubt of breeding and discernment in a world gone hopelessly vulgar, then the drive to transform the beverage into a mass pleasure is ghastly. If, however, you think that wine needs to evolve—as it always has, since the time of Cistercian monks in twelfth-century Burgundy—to avoid becoming something that just a mandarin elite consumes, the dramatic changes of the past few decades are welcome, even if they mean that classic styles of wine, like classic fashions or tastes in art, might suffer.

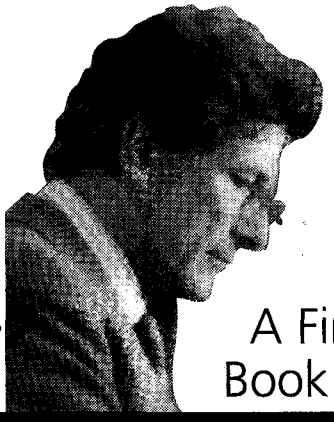
Not "Wine for Dummies," in other words. Both Echikson, a longtime contributor to various magazines—including, full disclosure, my former employer, *Wine Spectator* (though we never met)—and a resident of Europe for two decades, and Osborne, a *New York Times Magazine* contributor and author of books on everything from sex in art to obscure children's ailments (more full disclosure: I've had dinner with the man on several occasions) are writing for audiences that have moved beyond Hearty Burgundy. Or for that matter, its modern incarnations—the easy-drinking, inexpensive "quaffers" cranked out by mega-wineries in Australia and California.

Echikson's subject is the debate, history, culture and destiny of winemaking in Bordeaux, a region that, in the minds of most wine connoisseurs, is synonymous with greatness in the bottle. Mythical, poetic, hyperventilating greatness. Of all the wines produced in the world, none carry more cachet among the true vinoscenti than Bordeaux. Certain hyper-rare wines from Burgundy, as well as Napa Valley Cabernet and even some Spanish and Italian wines, give red Bordeaux a run for its money. But in the end, collectors counting on their wines to appreciate in value have always bet on Bordeaux from the Médoc. On the Left Bank of the Gironde River, the Médoc is home to some of the most celebrated wines ever created: Haut-Brion, Margaux, Latour, Lafite Rothschild, Mouton Rothschild, the "first growth," or *premier cru*, chateaus in the Classification of 1855, a ranking of quality that has persisted unchanged—except for the elevation of Mouton in 1973—for a century and a half. These are the wines that professional tasters routinely swoon over. The auction market in fine and rare wines exists almost entirely on their account.

However, the times they are a-changin' in Bordeaux, and Echikson has set out to chronicle the shift.

The Left Bank chateaus represent Bordeaux's Anglophile aristocracy (Bordeaux was, for much of its history, effectively the vineland of Britain). Families who own and operate estates there don't like change, and since speculation in their Cabernet Sauvignon–based wines took off in the 1980s they haven't had to modify the rather arcane way they do business. (Wines must pass through several tiers on the way to market, and each step of the process adds cost to the final price; the best wines are sold as "futures," two years in advance of release.) Collectors have been more than happy to shell out, as they did for the highly touted 2000 vintage, in excess of $100 (and often much more) a bottle for top wines. The Bordelais, after decades of ups and down before and after World War II, have become very, very rich.

Matthew DeBord, a former editor at Wine Spectator, *is the author of* The New York Book of Wine *(Universe) and the forthcoming* Wine Country USA *(Rizzoli).*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Unless you have met an authentic Médocain, it's hard to understand just how conservative, how devoted to tradition, the typical Right Bank vintner is. They favor elegant, English-country fashions (this is among the last bastions of costly tweeds and flannels), are almost all men (who rarely appear without neckties), are formal to an appealing fault (they make Prince Charles look like a cutup) and to a one—even if they would never admit it—both welcome and resent the influence of one man, the American wine critic Robert Parker Jr., whose newsletter *The Wine Advocate* sets the price of their wines each year, and whose love of the region has insured its fortunes. Although Echikson is less obsessed with Parker than other wine writers, "The Nose" from Monkton, Maryland, is nevertheless a major character in his book. This is because Parker recently began to anoint a new style of red wine as Bordeaux's salvation.

Left Bank wines, predominantly Cabernet Sauvignon, are made to age; a bottle of Lafite Rothschild, for example, is supposed to be unapproachable in its youth. The tradition is to cellar it for a decade (or two, or three), then enjoy it in all its faded nuance once it has properly matured. Or to sell it once it has quintupled in value. Or just to pass it down through the centuries; bottles believed to be owned by Thomas Jefferson fetched the highest prices ever paid for wine.

That approach was fine when these wines were drunk largely by the English upper class, who favored many of the funky aspects that fine old "claret" could develop (bitter, astringent notes and age-defeated fruit to go along with the seductive tobacco and leather aromas). But wine has changed. Modern palates, for whom Parker is Virgil, crave sweeter, richer wines—so-called fruit bombs—that can be drunk right away. Enter the rebellious Bordeaux *garagiste*, a winemaker whose money is often new, whose grape is Merlot, whose stomping ground is the more informal and picturesque Right Bank of the Gironde, who wears Levi's rather than Hermès cravats, and whose winery, quite literally, is a garage. There is no grand chateau. Production is small—much smaller than the 17,000 cases bottled each year by the first growths. "In the world of Bordeaux winemaking, the Right Bank is dominated by radical new winemakers bent on overturning many of the region's traditions," Echikson writes.

The jury is still out on whether these New Wave wines can match the old stuff for investment potential, and Echikson is careful to point out that prices, rather than tasters' impressions (or Parker's scores on the 100-point scale), were what determined the Classification of 1855 in the first place. Haut-Brion, for example, became a first growth because its wines had always commanded top dollar. But Parker is sold on the *garagistes*, and Echikson suggests that he's promoted their wines precisely because he has become disgusted with price-gouging and slipping quality on the part of the Old Guard.

This is a book full of sturdy reporting and the skillful application of years of experience in the field. Echikson knows the players, knows the gossip and knows everything about the feuds and friendships that dominate the wine trade in this region, where it's the very top tier in Bordeaux that commands the highest prices and brings in the most money from international collectors, especially Americans. But the New Wave in Bordeaux isn't quite enough to carry the narrative, so Echikson has interspersed his saga of the *garagistes* versus the Old Guard with an engaging, if slightly dated, story about the battle for Château d'Yquem, the legendary producer of Bordeaux's other collectible wine, sweet Sauternes. (Besides a neat pun, the "noble rot" of the title is a beneficial fungus that shrivels and desiccates Yquem's grapes, making them naturally sweet and the wines made from them long-lived.)

Count Alexandre de Lur-Saluces, who for years ran the Yquem estate (often incompetently, according to Echikson), is depicted as the oldest of the Old Guard, a hidebound aristocrat who refuses to give in to the lure of global capitalism and in the process becomes a foil for everyone from luxury-goods purveyor LVMH's Bernard Arnault, who bought Yquem in 1996, to his own family, whom the count has barred from Yquem for life. Hilariously, this nineteenth-century personality becomes a folk hero to antiglobalist activists in France. But in the end, he's shouldered into a marginal role at Yquem, and Echikson offers his fall as a cautionary tale for the rest of Bordeaux's tradition-bound reactionaries.

Of course, the picture is not universally rosy for the upstarts. An established chateau, after all, can ride out a few bad years. A *garagiste*, often over-leveraged and dependent on ascending Parker scores to justify high prices, cannot. One or two bad years can spell disaster, and Echikson, although optimistic about a *garagiste* future, ends his story on a somber note, with the weak 2002 vintage and the possibility that the revolution may have run its course.

After so much time in cloistered Bordeaux, it's refreshing to pick up Lawrence

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Osborne's globetrotting foray into a world that he clearly admires but can't quite figure out—either as a journalist or a wannabe connoisseur. Osborne has done something here I've never seen in wine writing. He has professed an inability to taste, then proceeded to drop himself down squarely in the middle of wine's oldest debate, which just happens to have a question of taste at its core: Should you try to bottle the best possible wine, regardless of what it takes (technology, blending techniques, shortcuts, sleight of hand, outright lawbreaking, etc.), or should you take what the vineyard gives you and, through minimal manipulation, bottle the result, as a quasi-spiritual expression of the soil?

In the "authenticity versus quality" debate, the authenticity side tends to identify with the esoteric concept of *terroir*, which means "land" in French, but really signifies an idea of wine as a cultural expression of place. The quality side prides itself on delivering consumers a wonderful product, year after year. The neurotic though often breathtaking wines of Burgundy are the best examples of what the authenticity camp covets; the reliable wines of Champagne, blended from various vintages and expressive of a house style, are nirvana to the quality boosters. Bordeaux, if you're keeping score, sits somewhere in between, as do red wines from Napa.

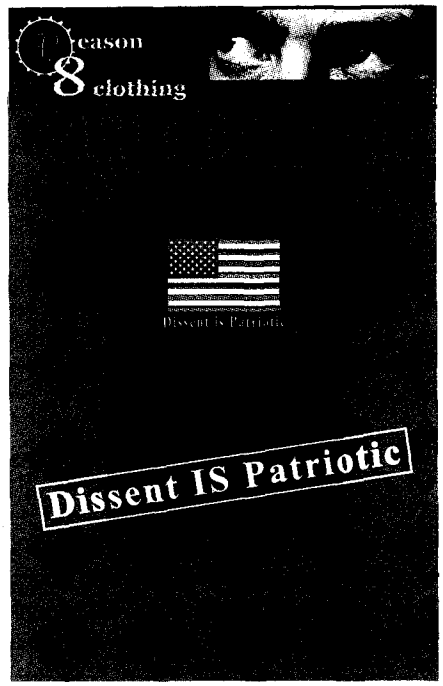
Osborne wants to believe in authenticity—one of his heroes is the prickly (and sometimes preposterous) American importer Neal Rosenthal, who along with gadfly Berkeley merchant Kermit Lynch is probably the most outspoken American opponent of soulless "techno wines"—but he's not sure he can actually nail down what all the fuss is about. When drinking wine, "a sinister little hunch always creeps into my mind," Osborne confesses. "I do not trust my own taste."

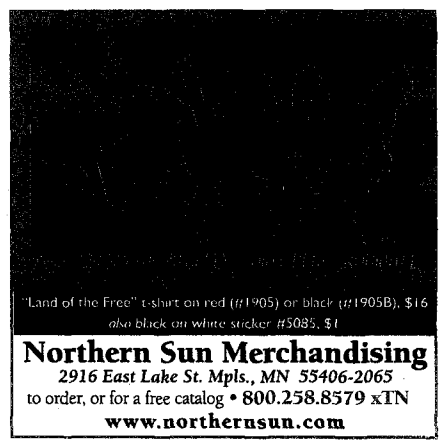
This lack of confidence leads Osborne on a wide-ranging tour of vineyards from Northern California to Tuscany; as he sips, he tries to determine how wine as an international product is influencing the way people think about taste. In California, Osborne seems largely bewildered and dismayed by all the super-confident go-go personalities. From there he moves on to France, only to be perplexed in Bordeaux by Echikson's *garagiste* movement and alternately charmed and repelled by the "Trotskyite" vintners of the south (who ran the California interloper Mondavi right out of a venture in Languedoc). He's a self-doubting enophilic Diogenes, wandering the vineyards in search of an honest winemaker who will finally give him the straight dope.

Osborne is supple and erudite on the page, and a better taster than he imagines. But where he really triumphs is in getting some true Big Kahunas to speak with the sort of candor they rarely offer the wine media. His chat with Piero Antinori, an immense force in the revitalization of Italian wine, is flecked with elegantly weary asides on the decline of Florence. (Echikson would approve of Antinori, a Florentine nobleman who saw the writing on the wall in the 1970s and radically reinvented his family's business.) In California, Paul Draper of Ridge and Randall Grahm of Bonny Doon are true to form: The former "apostle of *terroir*" meanders his wind-whipped Santa Cruz vineyard making immutable statements about the validity of an American *terroir*; Grahm calls himself the "agnostic of *terroir*" and rolls his eyes at *terroir*-istic statements made by... Paul Draper.

The pleasure is in the journey here, as it should be in a quest narrative in which the curious author seeks the counsel of wine-making wise men. Osborne lacks Echikson's rubbed-into-the-grain knowledge, but he more than makes up for it with a series of head-turning insights and offhandedly learned observations. A photo of Rhône winemakers before the arrival of modern technology reminds him of a "gathering of anarchist bomb makers loitering in a sooty cave." He likens Mondavi's second wife, Margrit, to Leni Riefenstahl (and the "lusty" Mondavi to Henry Miller), calling her "coquettish and dominant." They clash, according to Osborne in one of many uproarious passages, "like a pair of toy triremes." And it gets better. A bearded Napa vineyard manager has the "Homeric helmsman look." This is what happens when a professional journalist and worldly, detached amateur—as opposed to the cheerfully anti-intellectual wine press (Echikson obviously excluded)—spends a year in this navel-gazing subculture. He dismantles it, but in the process makes it seem as if it matters more than ever.

Still, Osborne is not in the business of drawing conclusions, and anyone looking for a grand payoff—a synthesis of the disparate strands of his theory of taste—won't find it here. By the time he gets to Italy, where both life and wine are gloriously uncomplicated, he peters out, somewhere in the vicinity of Puglia. But it's a good place to peter out, with a simple glass of wine in hand and a libertine's, rather than a connoisseur's, motto on the lips, courtesy of the Colossus of Maroussi: peace to all men and life more abundant. Obsborne gives up, but he goes down drinking. ■

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LETTERS
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(Continued From Page 2)
blockade of North Korea and treating France and Saudi Arabia as enemies; I can only conclude that he is a lunatic. David Brooks's dismissal of criticism of neocons as anti-Semitism is a malicious slander. I find it striking that these neocon warriors have all avoided military experience (and are thus known as chickenhawks). I heartily agree with Senator Hagel that Perle should have gone into Iraq with the first wave of soldiers. MORTON WACHSPRESS

IT GIVES HIM THE WILLIES

Ankara, Turkey

■ The myth of prophetic antifascism lives on. In his review of my biography *The Red Millionaire* ["Willi the Red," Feb. 16], Russell Jacoby seeks to rehabilitate Willi Münzenberg as a "civilian general in the fight against fascism," as "one of the few who foresaw the dangers of Nazism." With these assertions, Jacoby displays astonishing historical ignorance about the Nazi rise to power. The real antifascist heroes of Weimar Germany were the Social Democrats, whom Münzenberg and his fellow Communists slandered relentlessly as "social fascists." On not a single occasion between 1928 and 1933 did Münzenberg stoop to cooperate with Germany's Socialists in the fight against fascism. He collaborated with the Nazis, most famously in promoting a plebiscite to bring down the Socialist government of Prussia, whose sizable police force was the last serious obstacle to a Nazi takeover. So, far from facing up to the consequences of the Communists' disastrous strategy of cooperating with Hitler in 1931–32, Münzenberg continued attacking German Socialists until Stalin told him to stop in the summer of 1934.

Had Jacoby paid closer attention to my book, he would have learned that the German Popular Front against Hitler was doomed because Socialists could not stomach working with the Communists, who had done so much to smooth the Nazi path to power. This schism was the greatest tragedy in the history of the European left, and yet Jacoby seems unaware of it. Perhaps he missed Chapters 12, 13 and 15?

As for Münzenberg's escape from Nazi Germany in 1933, I am accused of wishing my "protagonist to die in a concentration camp" because I point out that party comrades like Walter Ulbricht criticized him severely for his swift flight and that Ulbricht exploited Münzenberg's reputation for "cowardice" to great effect when he wrested control of the German Communist Party from his rival in 1936.

Which brings me to the hoariest myth of all. Jacoby follows Münzenberg's apologists in seeking out some sort of principled "break" with Moscow: "By 1939 he had had enough of his Soviet masters." The truth is the exact opposite: His Soviet masters had had enough of *him*. Until Münzenberg was expelled from the party, against his will, he was still lobbying for new infusions of Kremlin cash, which, unfortunately for him, were no longer on offer. Is it really so controversial to point out such obvious, abundantly documented facts? As Jacoby himself admits of my scholarship, "the facts are here." SEAN MCMEEKIN

JACOBY REPLIES

Los Angeles

■ Sean McMeekin brings to the life of Willi Münzenberg a Hollywood knack for overstatement and a foaming anti-Communism. From his misleading title, *The Red Millionaire*, and overheated chapter headings like "Tango With the Devil" and "Follow the Money" to the conclusion, in which Münzenberg is charged with inspiring today's suicide bombers, McMeekin constructs a cartoon of twentieth-century Communism. He calls the Communist International "the greatest terrorist conspiracy of the last century," which sought to "destroy Western 'bourgeois' society by infiltrating its institutions from within." He closes his book by gloating that in Münzenberg's "ghastly death"—a suicide or murder—"there is a kind of justice, although for the millions of victims of communism, there will never be justice enough." In charging Münzenberg with mass murder, McMeekin has lost all touch with reality. Münzenberg was not Eichmann; he was an editor, propagandist and publisher.

I have no desire to defend the sectarian (and disastrous) policies of German Communism, which Münzenberg for many years faithfully reflected. But if McMeekin wants to review that history, he may have to go beyond reading

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his own Chapters 12, 13 and 15. (He could also *read* them. He states in his letter that "on not a single occasion" did Münzenberg resist Nazism before 1933. He states in Chapter 13 that "repeatedly during spring and summer 1930, Münzenberg ran inflammatory stories exposing Nazi brutality.")

His assertion that the schism between Socialists and Communists represents the "greatest tragedy" of the European left is hardly controversial, but he is wrong if he believes Münzenberg had much to do with it. The bad blood between Communists and Socialists goes back at least to the founding of the Third International and the 1919 murders of Rosa Luxemburg and Karl Liebknecht by a Socialist government. Moreover, his effort to trumpet the Socialists as the "real-antifascist heroes of Weimar" fits with his black-and-white version of history, but with little else. For decades historians have explored the political paralysis of the German Socialists, what the Socialist Julius Branthaul called "German Social Democracy's surrender before Fascism." In the failure to stop Nazism there is plenty of blame to go around to Socialists and Communists alike.

However, McMeekin likes to keep things simple. The notion that the Communists "doomed" the "German Popular Front against Hitler" makes no sense. To the extent such an entity existed, it was an exile organization created by Münzenberg in Paris and had little future in Nazi Europe. Finally, McMeekin imagines he is bravely attacking "the hoariest myth of all" (a myth entertained by how many?) about his protagonist leaving the party. The claim that he was expelled kicking and screaming in February 1939 is not corroborated by the most careful study, Harald Wessel's *Münzenbergs Ende* (in German); indeed it is contradicted by material in McMeekin's own book.

Unfortunately, McMeekin prefers to divide the world into good guys and bad guys. Perhaps he should try screenwriting. RUSSELL JACOBY

HELP RESTORE 'THE INQUISITION'!

Tempe, Ariz.

■ Arthur Danto's review of the Philip Guston exhibit [Dec. 29] mentions Guston's references to the Ku Klux Klan. In 1934, Guston and Ruben Kadish attended mural workshops in Los Angeles taught by David Siqueiros, who, in 1935, invited them to Morelia, Mexico, to paint a mural at the very radical state university. *The Struggle Against Terror and Fascism* was completed that summer; one of its dominant themes is the Klan. Because of the influence of the radical university and the mural's Catholic figures and symbols, it later became known as *The Inquisition*. The conservative Catholic majority did not receive the mural well, and in 1940 the church prevailed; the mural was painted over and forgotten. In 1975 during building reconstruction, it was discovered under painted cloth, which had preserved many of its original colors. The Southwest Heritage Foundation (440 East Southern Avenue, Tempe, AZ 85282) is trying to restore the mural and place it in the context of radical US and Mexican mural painting of the 1930s and '40s. VICTOR ARONOW

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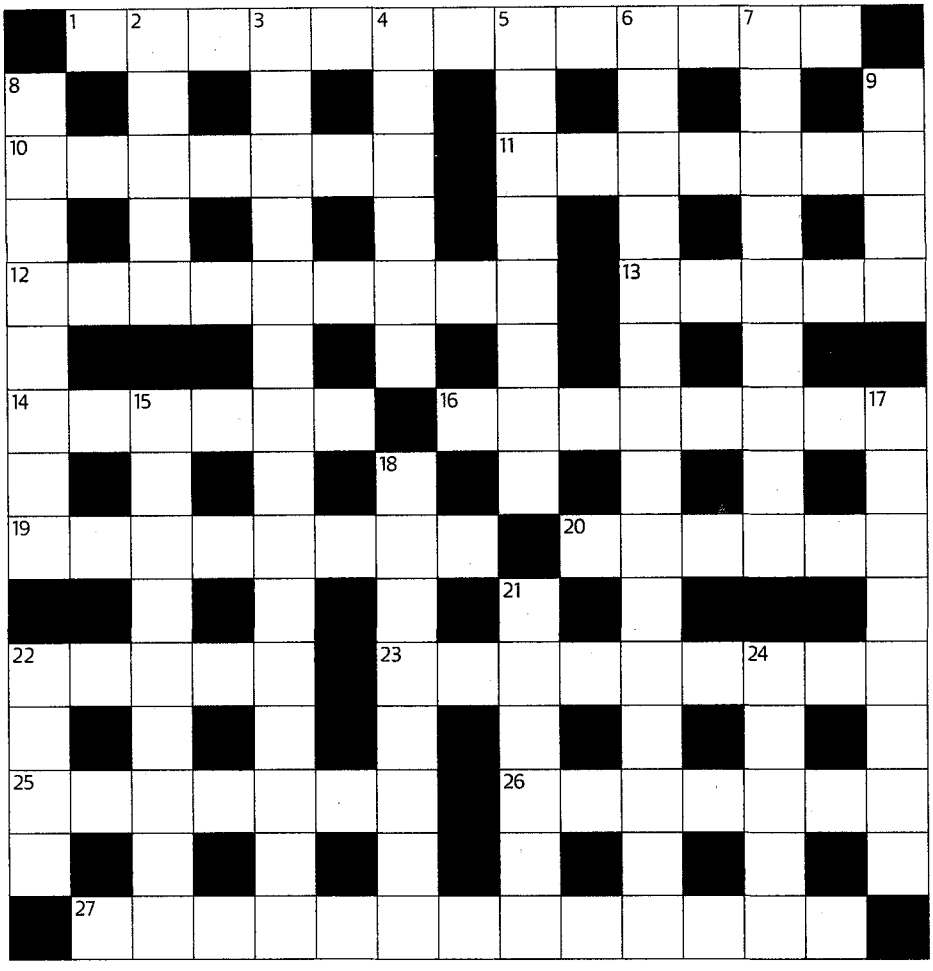

ACROSS

1 They're pretty old, male or female, taking years to see a rainstorm going in opposite directions. (13)

10 and **17** down With the wrong sort, I (as Hans might say) have a great act belonging to the lady and her fans at one time. (7,8)

11 Not many, perhaps—or just the opposite? (7)

12 Is the car a goner—wrecked because of self-importance? (9)

13 Always a well-known model, or shirt, to turn inside out! (5)

14 They win only a tiny bit—or less, more likely. (6)

16 Sounds like what you take when you start the car—and really quit. (5,3)

19 Stands for bric-a-brac, but that's now all changed...(4-4)

20 ...and are the stands so grand in such places? (6)

22 There's a lot about a classic number that might help the flowers grow! (5)

23 Where things supposedly come out in a shallow basin of the North Sea? (2,3,4)

25 Tom's father, one hears, is a real one for pulling out the chestnuts! (4-3)

26 Nicely arranged where the waitress might write down "ham and eggs." (2,5)

27 It doesn't mean the other member of the firm is dumb, however! (6,7)

DOWN

2 Chemical compound made from chopped up trees. (5)

3 What young Horner insisted on having, being somewhat of a buttinsky. (1,6,2,3,3)

4 What's the point to being not quite an Earl, like Macbeth? The answer is a real gas! (6)

5 They just love to play—probably not for money! (8)

6 Where you left that bathing suit after many stops at holiday camps? Desperate measures implied! (2,3,4,6)

7 A made-up expression for the occasion, but having the crown done improperly. (5-4)

8 "Lex" once—now "Alarm" possibly. (5,3)

9 Time's up! Give out the answer! (4)

15 A bad mark to start off, with the lattice being more than enough for the composer! (9)

17 See 10 across

18 Sometimes called "salt," it suggests humor in high places...(5,3)

21 ...and half of 18 tops the French to be a so-called scourge. (6)

22 What certain birds do, to make a kind of turtle soup. (4)

24 To sum up the French is to mix things up completely. (5)

PUZZLED? No more cross words. If you don't see why "Lures" are "Ground Rules" send for those of Mr. Lewis to: Puzzled, The Nation, 33 Irving Place, New York, NY 10003, or access our website at www.thenation.com/about/crossword.mhtml.

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A	■	I	■	I	■	T	■	A	■	E	■	N	■	A
L	A	C	O	N	I	A	■	R	E	S	T	F	U	L
I	■	K	■	U	■	N	■	L	■	P	■	A	■	L
■	L	I	M	P	I	D	L	Y	■	R	O	N	D	O
N	■	N	■	■	■	S	■	■	■	E	■	T	■	F
E	D	G	E	S	■	F	L	A	G	S	T	A	F	F
U	■	■	■	I	■	O	■	B	■	S	■	■	■	T
F	L	A	T	T	E	R	E	R	■	O	B	E	A	H
C	■	W	■	S	■	■	■	O	■	■	■	N	■	E
H	E	A	R	T	■	H	I	G	H	T	I	M	E	■
A	■	Y	■	I	■	Y	■	A	■	U	■	A	■	D
T	R	O	L	L	O	P	■	T	O	B	A	S	C	O
E	■	F	■	L	■	E	■	E	■	E	■	S	■	G
L	I	F	E	■	P	R	E	S	E	R	V	E	R	S

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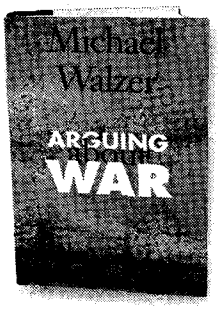

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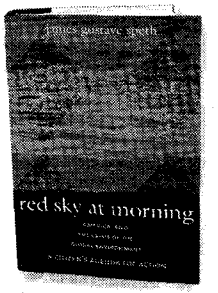

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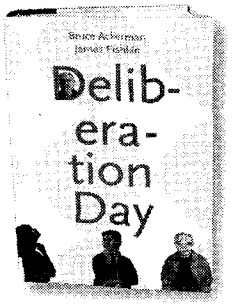

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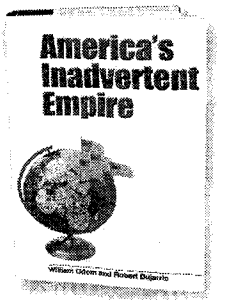

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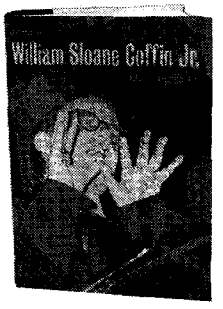

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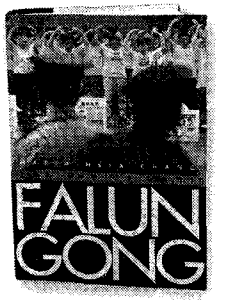

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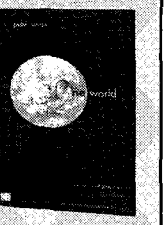

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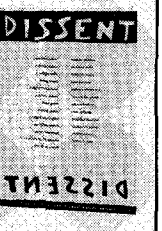

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